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# Pearls of the Islamic Faith.

## THE SINLESS PROPHET.

To determine the actual sinlessness of a prophet, we consider his own claim thereto and the evidence of his contemporaries, and it is these two points we intend to discuss below. The discussion of the first point again gives rise to two questions, *viz.*, firstly, with what extraordinary power and confidence he offers himself and his relations with others to be judged by the highest moral standard of society and by its established usages and laws, and, secondly, with what a deep-rooted conviction and sure and certain knowledge of his own truth and sincerity he handles all matters relating to spirituality, morals and beliefs. In the life of our Holy Prophet Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, the first question is conclusively determined by the following verse of the Holy Quran : " And before my claim to prophethood I have lived among you a great part of my life : do you not then understand." An argument of so valid and conclusive a nature we do not meet with in the life of any prophet or reformer of any religion, country or age, and the pages of history would in vain be turned over to find another such instance. To understand the force of this argument, it is necessary to consider the position of the Holy Prophet. The task he was engaged in was the extirpation of the inveterate customs and established usages, recognised beliefs and revered objects of worship of a people who being bred in pride and vanity were jealous in the highest degree of all that they held dear, and whose ordinary contentions and quarrels led to feuds and wars lasting for generations. It was this nation of sturdy warriors whose feelings the Holy Prophet excited by attacking whatever they most cherished. Then he invited to judge him by the highest standard of morality recognised by them, and to oppose and vanquish him, if it lay in their power, by their individual and combined efforts. Nor did his words fall on deaf ears. The whole nation



was excited to the highest pitch and engaged day and night to find some hole through which it could attack the impregnable fortress of his position. Under these circumstances which had brought about a state of highest excitement and a most fiery opposition against the Holy Prophet, he put forward the bold claim that he had a spotless character and challenged his opponents to point out any blame in him. He had passed forty years of life, he said, among them before he claimed to be a prophet of God, was it not a sign of his truth. What ! could he be guilty of falsehood and imposture in his old age who had passed the prime of his life in self-restraint and austerity, whose conduct remained unimpeached under the strongest temptations of youth and passions, and against whom no charge was ever laid of any misconduct, falsehood, fabrication and dishonesty. Here we have a claimant to sinlessness appealing to reason and judgment to show and impress the truth and sincerity of his claim. Every mind capable of forming a sound judgment and coming to a true conclusion would at once realize the living and clear perception of the claimant's own conviction of his sinlessness, and unshakable certainty that his life was so clear of every guilt and so free from every blot that a study of it alone was sufficient to convince one of his truth.

In fact, purity of life and spotlessness of character are the surest criterions of a claimant's truth. The first utterance of the claim to a heavenly mission sets all inquiring natures to look into his life and character and his relations with society. Such an inquiry must necessarily be a very scrutinous one, for the person openly claims to be the guardian and preserver of the faith of the people, their most valuable property, and to secure it against every assault. It needs no demonstration to prove that such a bold claim can not be blindly accepted by any one. The preciousness of the charge would compel a man to scrutinize most minutely the character and conduct of the claimant as appears in his earlier life and past career. Instances of this we witness in our daily life. A creditor would not lend his money unless he is satisfied as to the conduct of his debtor. But a claimant to prophethood requires much more. He requires people to make over to him the charge, not of any material property, but of the spiritual property of faith and



belief, to submit to him their desires, their intentions, their knowledge and their judgments, nay to submit their very will and conscience to him. Thus the Holy Quran says: "I swear by my Lordship which has brought thee up for a special end and object and made thee a perfect teacher of mankind and a perfect guide,—I swear that these people will not be perfect in their faith until they set thee up as a judge between them on points where they differ and do not feel any difficulty in accepting thy decision and in submitting to thy will and judgment with entire submission," On a glance, it would appear that this verse requires the submission of free will and authoritatively makes the experiences of the old and the judgments of the wise yield to the word of one man. Such entire submission of opinion on the part of a jealous people could not be easily obtained. Even recognised political leaders and the wisest politicians cannot claim such unconditional assent to their opinions, and the widest differences exist in the world in this respect. But against all this experience of human nature, we find the free and ungovernable people of a warm climate, their spirited youth and experienced old men, bowing before the word of the Holy Prophet with entire submission and complete resignation. This is the point which deserves the reader's deepest consideration.

In short, as the trust of faith is far more valuable than the trust of jewels, a more scrutinous and deeper enquiry into the life and conduct of a claimant to prophethood is necessary than that in the case of an ordinary trustee. This shows the importance of the verse already quoted as to his "having lived a life among them, which challenges the opponents of the Holy Prophet to point out any fault or blame in his life."

In short, it is necessary that there should be no obscurity about the life of a person who claims a heavenly mission, and it should be within the reach of every seeker after truth so that he may be able to study it. For no criticism can be passed on a person whose life is hidden from the eyes of the public and therefore, no conclusion can be reached with respect to him. From this point of view, our Holy Prophet enjoys an eminent distinction. The period of his life previous to prophethood is laid open before us in the verse of the Holy Quran quoted in the beginning, while the evidence of his contemporary



relatives and others who had to deal with him, shows conclusively that he was always regarded as the *amín* and the *mámún*, i. e., the faithful one, and one in whom confidence can be placed. So great was the Holy Prophet's repute for faithfulness at that early age that he was known by these titles among his countrymen. But in the life of Jesus, there is nothing comparable with the noble assertion made in the Holy Quran with regard to the Holy Prophet. He never addressed his people in a similar manner and never referred to his previous character as proof of his truthfulness in his claim. We do not here mean to raise the question what his contemporaries would have said if he had made such an assertion, whether they would have accepted it silently being unable to point out any fault or whether they would have subverted it. The question at present is simply this, whether in the incomplete record of the ministry of Jesus any assertion is attributed to him that his past career was evidence of his truth. If there is any such assertion we will have reason to suppose upon the authority of the Gospels that Jesus himself at least was conscious of the spotlessness of his character previous to his ministry. This is a point of special importance in determining sinlessness.

Now we come to the second question which offers itself solution. Here we have to see the valuable property which Islam lays open five times a day before the whole world. It is the holy formula "There is no God but God and Mohammad is His Prophet." The connection between the two parts of this formula deserves a deep consideration. In the first phrase, it is intended by the negation of the false deities and the assertion of the existence of one God only, that nothing besides God deserves to be worshipped, for in Him are to be found all the attributes of perfection whereas some sort of weakness or fault attends all besides Him. But we have to see further whether the two parts of this phrase, viz., the negation of false deities and the assertion of the oneness of God stand to one another in the relation of argument to assertion. In other and plainer words, does the negation of the false deities demonstrate to satisfaction that God exists? In answer to this question, I would say that even if such a relation exists between the two parts of this phrase, it is not such a strong connection as



should lead to an undeniable and necessary conclusion. If we consider one of the phrase as an argument for the other, the inference suggested is at the utmost as strong as an inference concerning the existence of the Creator from that of the creatures. That is to say, if a person of sound judgment and good nature were to ponder deeply upon the images set up by human imagination and the idols and gods which are the creation of fancy, and then reach the conclusion that they do not deserve to be worshipped on account of their weakness, imperfection and dependence, still this research can lead him at the utmost to the conclusion that there may be a Higher Being than the idols of stone or human beings wrongly supposed to be gods, which should possess all attributes of perfection. An illustration would better serve the purpose. Jesus Christ is one of the false deities, and intelligent men among the Christian have begun to see after due deliberation and minute criticism that such a claim for an imperfect and weak human being like Jesus Christ is one of the greatest absurdities and shows a great contempt for human reason and intelligence. But notwithstanding this, they are yet very far off from the true and living God, and are quite ignorant of the bliss which a man enjoys in the knowledge of God. All that we can learn by human efforts is that there may be a Creator of this vast universe, but that is not the goal of human happiness. The thirst of a true lover and an ardent seeker can never be satisfied until he finds himself on the fountain which can give him the water of life. He is like the fish which cannot live outside water whatever other comforts there may be. Human nature in its true purity cannot be satisfied by lifeless idols and images which are the creation of human fancy. The fire of love cannot be quenched until the word of the beloved one breathes a life into the lover. In fact, there is no other way to the recognition of God except that the perfect, powerful and living God should reveal Himself by His own awful, mighty and blissful voice. It is for this reason that Holy Quran repeatedly refutes the divinity of all false deities by making use of the argument that they do not hear the voice of their worshippers, nor do they answer them. Thus when the Israelites committed the foolish act of worshipping a calf,



Almighty God reprimanded them, saying "Do they not consider that the calf does not answer them, nor has it any power to do them any evil or good." This verse and similar other verses abounding in the Holy Quran show that one of the highest and most perfect and plain ways of the recognition of God is that He should Himself show His existence.

There is another important stage through which a seeker after truth must pass and which to all appearance is very difficult of attainment. There is no doubt that by reflection upon the system of the universe and the contrivance and design displayed in it, men of sound judgment have made a progress from the low condition in which only the possibility of the existence of God is admitted to the higher condition in which the existence of God is actually admitted, but such a belief cannot make a man attain the connection which should exist between God and men. The doctrine of the attributes of God is a principle at which materialists and the worldly wise have sadly stumbled. This doctrine has also been the chief obstacle in the path of the philosophers and there have been great difficulties in the right understanding of the connection between God and men. Most people think that simply a belief in the existence of God is sufficient for man. There is no yearning in their hearts to seek a connection with God. This weakness in belief is the result of looking upon God as a power practically without any control over the system of the universe. Even those who consider God to be the maker of universe regard Him simply as a mason who having once erected the building of this world and set the laws in motion, has nothing more to do with it. Almighty God is not recognised as having control over the particles of the universe, having power to reveal at every moment the manifestations of His glory and beauty and to enforce His will and intention under all circumstances, ever speaking to His righteous servants, hearing and accepting prayers, answering them in clear and unambiguous words, unchangeably continuing to send His revelations and inspirations and making them a living witness of His own existence, and having in his own hands the control of every law and system prevailing in the universe. In short, Almighty God, is not believed to be the mighty, powerful and living



Being He is, and it is evident that unless a man has such a strong faith in Him, he cannot have any yearning to seek a connection with Him. Under the varying circumstances and changing conditions of human life, when all hopes are cut off and all resources exhausted, a holy feeling is sometime generated in human nature which turns a man, in that State of utter helplessness and weakness, to heaven and inspires into his heart the means altogether without any effect in bringing about the fulfilment of his object. But there are difficulties in this path. That the prayer should proceed from the core of the heart and that there should not hang any idea of improbability about it, it is necessary that the supplicator's faith should be so strong that he may with true bliss and clear knowledge believe in the attributes of God, and his heart should fully realize with true delight that against the knowledge, power and mighty will of the Divine Being, there is not the least obstacle in the world. But in the age in which we live, men can hardly conceive such an idea. The materialistic tendency is strong, the ephemeral worldly successes are given such an importance, and men are so completely occupied in the affairs of the world and so entirely taken up with its luxuries, that the belief in the advantages and the efficacy of prayer has practically vanished away, and to regard prayer as an efficacious cause is considered as an absurdity and superstition. The influence of materialism is growing stronger day by day, and men are so completely engaged in the search of physical resources to the exclusion of all spiritual means as if their very natures had been made for it. The result is that the worship of these numberless idols of means and causes does not allow men to turn for a single moment to the great Creator and Controller of causes. As a ceremonial, prayer has no doubt a place in all religions, Christianity, Arya Samaj, Brahmoism and Mohamadanism, but it is gone through as a vapid and lifeless ceremony, dry words uttered by the tongue and not proceeding from the depth of the heart. It is attended everywhere with dubiety, with the idea that what is asked for in the prayer is not possible. This morbid feeling divests the prayer of its efficacy. Hands are raised up for prayer but the heart is full of doubt and uncertainty. When the effect of



an object is considered impossible by a person, and no physical causes or material resources are left to which he can advert, he thinks that Almighty God too has not the power to bring about its performance or to bring into existence causes which should lead to its fulfilment. His heart because of its weakness cannot give him the consolation that however strong the hands which have burned the fire he is to be cast into, there is yet above them all a Hand still more mighty and strong which has the wonderful power to extinguish its flames against all expectations and to turn it into a garden of roses.

We come now to the discussion of the relation between the two parts of "there is no Deity but God, Mohammad is the prophet of God." The second part of this formula, *viz.*, Mohammad is the Prophet of God, is in fact an argument for the assertion which we have seen is contained in the first part, *viz.*, that there is no god besides God. The negation of all false deities followed by the word *Allah* shows conclusively that *Allah* is the possessor of all attributes of perfection. In other words, it is here affirmed that in *Allah* are to be found all those attributes which are necessary for exercising a complete control and a boundless power over every particle, every force and every law of this universe, and that the combined efforts and powers of the whole universe cannot prevail in the slightest degree against His wonderful power, mighty will and all-overpowering intention. But it is after all an assertion and that with regard to a Being who is hidden from the physical eye, and about whose existence a certainty is with great difficulty created in the human heart, to say nothing of such certainty and strong faith about His attributes. This difficulty is obviated by the second part which states that Mohammad is the Prophet of God. The reason for this is that in contrast with the existence of God which is unknown, incomprehensible and hidden from the human eye, the person of the perfect man. Mohammad, is known and comprehensible, and, therefore, serves as a means for the recognition of God, and as an argument for His existence. In fact, between *Allah* and Mohammad, there is a perfect relation and a wonderful resemblance. Both these words signify perfection and excellence in the highest degree. As the word *Allah* denotes a Being which possesses all attributes of perfection and is free



from every defect or fault, so the word Mohammad too plainly signifies that he is in the highest degree a possessor of all those excellences which human beings can attain to, and is perfectly free from every defect and weakness which is a blot upon the face of humanity or a disgrace to human nature. The word Mohammad literally means one who is praised in the highest degree, or the person with whose praise both heaven and earth are filled up. That no one can attain to this noble dignity unless he possesses all excellences and is free from all defects and faults, is plain enough. Is there any one who has a yearning for true faith and a thirst for Divine knowledge, who is endowed with an exquisite sentiment and a right judgment? If there is, let him ponder over the wonderful resemblance and relation between the two names *Allah* and *Mohammad*, and the perfect order and arrangement of the words *La-illaha-ill-allaho Mohammad ur-Rasulallahe*. Here we have an excellent truth and a proof of an excellent truth combined in one phrase. A beautiful and attractive assertion that God exists and that besides Him nothing deserves to be worshipped, and equally beautiful and attractive argument that Mohammad is His Prophet. This latter phrase discloses in fact the deep secret that Mohammad being the perfect man whose noble words and deeds deserve to be praised throughout the whole world, there is no doubt that the Being whose messenger such a perfect and sinless man is, must also be the possessor of all attributes of perfection. From the messenger is to be judged the greatness and glory of the power which sends him, and this is recognised even by the established usages of the world. It is for this reason that worldly governments exercise their powers so judiciously in the selection of their ambassadors lest an incompetent man should lower their dignity in the estimation of others. Bearing this in mind, it will be easily seen that for the greater Ruler of the universe, the King of kings, whose names is *Allah*, no other ambassador can be proposed besides Mohammad, for as the king is a perfect King. His ambassador must also be a perfect one. Nay, more than this. We assert that keeping in mind the full significance of the word *Allah*, no other name besides the blessed name of Mohammad is suitable and in consonance with the perfection of the Divine Being.



My heart is full of hope that impartial readers who have an interest in religion or at least those in whom the critical faculty does not lie dormant, will give a deep consideration to the question which we have raised above, and ponder whether this golden formula of Islam does not lead to conclusion of immense importance. Is it a chance combination of words without any nicety of meaning in it or more truly, is there not a truth in every word of it the like of which it is impossible to find in any religion, old or new? We request the advocates of all religions with an open heart, first to show an assertion like this, and then weigh the arguments for the one with those for the other. It can be easily conceived how great must be the certainty and how sound the conviction of a man about his own truth, perfection and innocence who unites his own name with the name of *Allah* and allows it to be uttered along with His name five times daily from the tops of high minarets to be echoed and re-echoed in the world till the day of judgment. We cannot describe the delight which we feel when I ponder over the deep significance of these names and strong connection between them. As no other name besides the name of *Allah* deserves to be celebrated so no one deserves to celebrate it besides Mohammad, for there are no other two names which can fulfil the same object and convey the same significance. In clear words, as it is necessary that the person of the Divine Being should possess all good attributes in their perfection; and be free from every defect, it is equally necessary that the person who gives information of His existence and comes as His vicegerent upon earth should also possess all good attributes and be free from all faults so far as it is possible for human being to be. These two ideas are expressed in the name of *Allah* and Mohammad, and besides these, there are no other names which can express the same idea. Even if Islam were devoid of the innumerable proofs of its truth which it possesses, this combination of names alone would have been sufficient proof of its truth.

We come now to the second point. The Holy Prophet before his claim to prophethood was reputed among the people as al-amin and al-mamun, i. e., the faithful and the trustworthy one. It is an admittedly true and well-known report that the Quresh used to confide their most



valuable trusts which they could not entrust elsewhere to the Holy Prophet, and thus by special Divine ordinance and wisdom, he was known as the faithful one long before he was charged with Divine Mission. As regards his ancestors, the Hashimites from whom the Holy Prophet descended, were known as the noblest tribe of the Quresh in the whole of Arabia, so much so that in the heat of opposition no one ever dared to find fault with the nobility and purity of the Prophet's descent. How majestic the claim and how strongly expressive of the consciousness of his own purity and innocence, that among the whole line of his ancestors up to Adam, there was not a single adulterer or adultress. Nothing was said against this claim nor did any one try to refute it and this is sufficient evidence of its truth. The importance of this assertion becomes the more evident when a glance is cast at the condition of the people before whom it was made. It is well-known that among the Arabs in general and the Quresh in particular, it was deemed as highly noble that a man should know the great and noble deeds done by his ancestors for long generations. Their great pride lay in being able to enumerate the excellences of their own forefathers and faults and weaknesses of the ancestors of their enemies in gathering where thousands of people assembled from different quarters. There were thousands among them who could repeat hundreds of thousands of verses containing description of battles for centuries before and deeds of glory done in long past ages. This extraordinary exercise of the faculty of memory has been admired even by learned Europeans. The silence of a people among whom the enumeration of faults was an essential part of national life, against the bold claims put forward by the Holy Prophet, is the strongest testimony of his innocence and sinlessness.

In the life of Holy Prophet by Ibn-i-Hisham which is one of the oldest and most authoritative works, it is stated that the Holy Prophet used to go every year to the annual gathering and offer Islam to the assembled crowds. On one occasion the Holy Prophet preached his mission to the Amirites who were present in the gathering, but they refused to listen to him. There was an old man among them who was much revered by all, but who on account of old age could not attend the gathering. The younger



people therefore used to repeat to him on their return home all the principal incidents of the gathering. Accordingly, the incident concerning the preaching of the Holy Prophet and their rejection of him, was also related before the old man. "Upon this" says the story, "the old man placed both his hands upon his head, and said; 'O children of Amir, I swear by God that an Ismaelite is not guilty of fabrication or imposture in this claim and the claim is quite true.'" In the same book it is stated that after the conversion of Hamza to Islam, Atba son of Rabia, said one day to the people when they were in the height of their rage, because Islam was flourishing and making progress daily: "Listen all ye who belong to the tribe of Quresh! If you like, I should have a conversation with Mohammad and offer some terms which he may accept and which we also may be willing to concede to, and thus we may get rid of his preaching." To this the people assented and accordingly Atba went to the Holy Prophet and addressed him thus: 'Son of my brother, thou knowest that thou hast a dignity and high place among us, and art of a noble decent.'..... Again, the same author reports that when the *ka'ba* was built anew, there was a great difference of opinion as to who should lay the black stone in its place and when the fire of a great feud which would have destroyed hundreds of families was about to be burned, "Abu Umayya, son of Mughira, who was revered by the people addressed them saying: To settle this difference, agree among yourselves and appoint him as judge who should first enter the gate of the mosque." This was agreed upon, and the Holy Prophet was the first person who made his entrance. Seeing him the people cried: 'This is the *amin* (the faithful one), we are willing to submit to his judgment, for this is Mohammad.' Ibn-i-Hisham then goes on to write that the Quresh used to call the Holy Prophet (the faithful one) before he received revelation from heaven. Upon another occasion the same author says; "The Holy Prophet advanced in years and wisdom, and Almighty God was his guard and protector. He protected him from the impurities and faults of the days of ignorance, because He had to appoint Him as His Messenger and to bestow upon Him all His blessings. In this manner did the Holy Prophet grow, so that when he reached the age of majority, he was in the whole community most



forward in doing good to others, highest in morals, noblest in goodness, best in kind treatment with his neighbours, superior to all in knowledge, most truthful in his words, most trustworthy of all, and free from all debasing and degrading morals and all evil deeds and words. It was on account of his having excelled in all virtues and being free from all vices that he was generally known by the title of Al-Amin."

These are the testimonies of a people who deemed it easier to suffer death than utter words of praise for one who did not deserve them it. This evidence was moreover given at a time when the Holy Prophet was seated on a platform wherevery few have escaped blame. It is in fact one of the greatest of God's blessings upon Islam that all the records of the life of Holy Prophet, all books of tradition which critically and historically carry a far greater weight than the sacred books of all other religions, and the poetical works which contain verses of the days of ignorance all unanimously testify that the Holy Prophet, both before, and after his ministry, was regarded as a perfectly blameless and innocent person. There is no other historical record of the life of any other prophet or reformer which being read critically should bring before the reader a character as blameless as that of the Holy Prophet. I assert with a full knowledge of the fact that in the earlier as well as in the latter ages, there is only one person who can truly be looked upon as the man of history, for he has done deeds and left marks which history is proud of recording in its pages.

### THE TRANSFORMATION WROUGHT BY THE HOLY PROPHET.

To have an idea of the miraculous transformation wrought by the greatest benefactor of mankind, the Holy Prophet that was born in the land of Hedjaz, it is necessary to cast a glance at the state of Arabia before and after his appearance. Before his advent, the Arabs worshipped strange gods and paid Divine honors to idols made of stone. They had no faith in the unity of God and in the day of judgment. They were in love with their false deities and attributed to them Divine powers. They believed that none but their idols brought about rain and made the field its produce, and



that the idols created the embryo in the womb and had full control over things pertaining to life and death. Every false god found in them ready believers. Each one of them believed himself to be under the patronage of a special deity before whom he bowed down. To him he addressed his supplications and prayers in time of distress, to him he looked up for the reward of his good works and before him he laid his needs and complaints. They were quite ignorant of the truth and walked in the dark and crooked paths of falsehood. They were content with their false gods and had no higher aspirations. They laboured under the delusion that their idols alone could answer their prayers and that God Himself was too high to meddle with human affairs. They firmly adhered to the belief that God had delegated to their deities dominion over the worlds of spirit and matter and invested them with all the Divine powers, Himself keeping aloof from this world. They were fully persuaded that their idols interceded for them with God, brought them into His nearness, gave them relief from their pains and led them to all sorts of success.

This is a brief summary of the religion of the pre-Islamic Arabs, the practical outcome of which was that they plunged themselves headlong into all sorts of brutal excesses, and what gave a still darker tinge to this picture was that they took a savage pride in their sins. They freely indulged in adultery and theft, murdered the innocent and robbed the stranger, ate up the property of orphans, oppressed the poor and tyrannized over the weak, and committed all sorts of sin without fear of retribution. They brought law the dignity of human nature and fell away from morality. They sank into wickedness and became like wild beasts. They ate the flesh of their brethren with avidity and drank their blood as if it were milk. In their revolt against God they went beyond all bounds. Their poets out of sheer impudence sang songs insulting to the fair sex. The rich among them amused themselves with drinking, gambling and quarrelling. Those who claimed to be thrifty trampled upon the rights of widows and orphans and their own blood-relations, and wasted their gains in the gratification of their carnal desires. On the most horrible features of Arab society was infanticide. They made away with



their children for fear of poverty and despatched their daughters in particular because they thought it a disgrace to give them in marriage. They were characterized by all the base and beastly qualities which can disgrace human nature. Fornication was so commonly practised by their men and women that large section of their society was composed of men of illegitimate birth. If there was some one among them who was pure-minded and detested their evil deeds, he had not the moral courage to express his abhorrence and utter words of counsel for fear of his own life and property. To be brief, the Arabs were a people who had never heard the voice of a preacher and were utter strangers to virtue and piety. There were few among them who were truthful or just.

In such dark days when all Arabia was corrupt to the core and its people were utterly polluted from within as well as from without, there appeared among them a prophet at Mecca. But they rejected him and refused to listen to his healing words. With a stubborn perverseness they persisted in their evil ways, and actuated by spite began to persecute their best well-wisher. He held up under their persecution and bore them patiently. He met their malice with benevolence and always returned good for evil and approached them like a well-meaning and sincere friend. For a long time he walked about the streets of Mecca, friendless and alone. On the one hand, he bore his sufferings with apostolic patience, and on the other, spent whole nights in praying for his benighted countrymen. At last his prayers were answered and the sun of truth shone forth in its full effulgence. In a short time Arabia was completely transformed. The hearts of seekers after truth were drawn to him with a mighty magnetism and every lover of truth began to seek the pleasure of the Lord. It seemed as if angels had come down from heaven to cast their holy influence over the hearts of men. Those who accepted the chosen one of God, showed extraordinary zeal for his cause. They laid down their lives for his sake and sealed their sincerity with their blood. By their deeds they proved to the world that they were the true and faithful servants of God. In the days of ignorance they were immersed in the depths of darkness, but the religion of God brought them into light and



liberty. Their evil dispositions were changed for virtuous inclinations. Their nocturnal orgies gave place to heartfelt prayer and their morning draughts, to singing the praises of God. When they had gained the utmost firmness of conviction, they made the service of God the end of their existence, and in this cause they laid down their lives and spent money without stint. Their practice conformed with their doctrine and showed how beautiful and fraught with blessings their faith was.

In order to put their faith to the severest possible test, they threw themselves into all sorts of danger and trials. This it was that made them so brave and so happy. This it was that braced their hearts and confirmed their belief and gave certainty to their knowledge. They put themselves into the crucible of God's love until their souls were wholly purged of the dross of earthliness and thus purified found union with God. They cleared the ways of the Lord. The path was full of thorns but to them it appeared as strewn with flowers. It was beset with terrible difficulties but to them its very difficulties proved inviting. Let one think for an instant how they forsook their former lawless lives and put down their wild and riotous passions, and he will be firmly convinced that all this wonderful change was due only to the healing influence of the grand personality of one Divine physician.

Indeed it was Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him,—that great Prophet whom God had chosen and trained under his special care—who first made the Arabs aware of the dignity of human nature and laid before them the beauty and grandeur of man's soul. Think over the sublimity of that spiritual life whose salutary example brought about such a marvellous spiritual awakening. Reflect upon the lives of the companions who rose from the depths of degradation and soared aloft until they reached the highest point of spiritual perfection. The Prophet found them living beastly lives, utterly strangers to God and His ways and possessing no definite ideas of right and wrong. He instructed them in the rules of right conduct and taught them how to lead righteous lives. He impressed upon them the necessity of purity, and gave them the minutest directions by which they could adopt the habits of cleanliness. He taught them



to dress decently and gave them rules of hygiene and laws of preserving health. Above all he laid much stress upon their always adopting the mean in all things. In short, he remodelled their whole society. When the savage Arabs had thoroughly mastered the rules of keeping their bodies clean, he drew their attention to moral duties and the virtues of faith, that through them they might attain to spiritual purity. When found that they had been full settled in the habits of morality and had become fixedly averse to what is morally sinful or hateful in the sight of God, and a new propensity to virtuous actions had been created in them, he initiated them, into the Divine mysteries. He created in them, a deep love for the source of all beauty and a burning desire for union with Him that they might rest in Him and find enjoyment in Him everlastingly.

The teachings of the Holy Prophet as embodied in the Holy Quran are graduated and can be marked off into three stages according to the different stages of a man's moral and spiritual development. The first stage comprehends rules calculated to lift up natural man from his savage and primitive state and to supply him with rudiments of morals. The second stage consists of a sublime and perfect system of ethics fitted to elevate man to the height of perfection as a moral being. The third stage is meant to make the moral man godly in the true sense of the word. At this stage man loses himself wholly in God and resigns himself completely to His will. Everywhere he sees the hand of God and finds no trace of himself or of anything else besides God. To him God is all in all. This is the final stage in the course of a seeker after God and is styled *istiqamat*, in the opening chapter of the Quran. Here all his labours are brought to an end. Here carnal desires vanish away, and self is conquered. Here the demon of lust is crushed to rise no more and the turmoil of passions ceases once for all. Then it is said; "To whom does all dominion belong to-day? To God, the Almighty, the Great." But the man who at his best is but moral and who has not found union with God, has not got beyond the reach of danger. The devil may claim him still as his own and the demon of lust may still get the mastery over him. Still greater victories are to be won and still mightier conquests are



to be made. The man who is not wholly annihilated in God, cannot be proof against the arrows of appetite.

The glory belongs to the Holy Quran that it carries a man to the heaven of perfect security, that high and sacred place where Satan is not allowed to set foot. Through this book man is raised to the highest point of perfection he is capable of. The case is quite different with other books claiming a Divine origin. They contain only the most elementary principles of morality, and fall far short of the high standard revealed by the Quran. While it contains a perfect revelation of God's will, they are but partial and incomplete. In this respect the Quran may be called a miracle of our Prophet—a miracle not only of knowledge but of power also. The miracles associated with the names of other prophets are stale and out of date. They remain confined only in books and have no practical value whatever. But the Quran shall remain a standing miracle for all times. That this claim is not a mere empty vaunt but rests on the sound ground of fact, may be shown by the following considerations :—

Firstly, the Quran comprehends all the necessary doctrines, precepts and directions which may not only guide man safely through the journey of life but also impart to him the most clear and certain knowledge respecting God, and show him the nearest and the surest way of seeing Him.

Secondly, the Quran advances the most convincing arguments in support of its truth, and we can draw upon its treasures of Divine wisdom for the refutation of all false systems of religion.

Thirdly, the language of the Quran is so sweet, beautiful and sublime, and the phrases used by it are so apt and so well chosen, that it has always defied and still defies comparison and has always won the reverential homage of the most eminent poets and orators of the world. It is moreover easy and simple and this fact further enhances its beauty. Are not these important facts sufficient to testify to the superhuman origin of the Quran?

We have said that the Quran is not only a miracle of knowledge but also a miracle of power. This is as clear as day. The wonderful spiritual influence exerted by the Holy Quran, and the marvellous transforma-



tion brought about by its teachings, have always puzzled philosophers. It has moved the hardest heart, renewed the most perverted will and regenerated the most depraved disposition and thus proved to the satisfaction of all persons not blinded by prejudice, that it was not Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, but the Almighty God working in him that effected all that. A deep and impassable gulf lay between man and God; the Quran filled it up. Men were at war with truth, the Quran reconciled them to it. Those who brought themselves under its beneficent influence made such progress in spirituality that many of them had personal communion with God and were favored with heavenly signs which were made a heritage for all true believers in the Prophet. It is for this reason that we are asked to show signs, we are not compelled to refer to ancient times but Almighty God favors us with them in the same manner as he favored the companions of the Prophet. The sacred books of our opponents, on the other hand, are full of meaningless fables and childish stories which serve no purpose to establish truth. They are wholly destitute of the Divine light which never goes out but shines brightly for ever more. The Quran as a miracle is therefore, sublime in both its aspects. Its blessings are wide and its miraculousness has been certified by all people.

There is another thing. If some great philosopher were to take in hand the work of reformation, he will find the reformation of a single person hardened in vice an almost impossible task. From this we may gauge the greatness of the person who in a short period of time transformed a whole nation. He pulled down the fabric of their infidelity and led them into the paths of righteousness and piety. Their very faces bore witness that they loved their Lord with a mighty love. In the cause of truth, they exerted all the powers of their body and mind, and went forth, alone and resourceless, to preach the word of God to all people of the earth. Their intellect became refined and their understanding became fitted for the comprehension of Divine mysteries. They began to shun all manner of sin and every appearance of evil, and there was implanted in them a deep love for what is good and a fixed aversion to what is bad. The men who once bowed down before idols became now the



champions of Islam. They spared no pains to spread Islam until it became the religion of Arabia, Persia, Asia Minor and several other countries, and went eastward as far as China. All places where infidelity reigned supreme were visited by them, and all countries where strange gods were worshipped heard their preaching. They faced death but never fell back; were cut down but always stuck to their post. As warriors of God they ran even into jaws of death but never deserted the standard of Islam. In this way they went to the very extremities of the earth. As rulers and administrators they proved that they were the best the world ever saw. Their practice conformed to their doctrine and in both they excelled the rest of the world. In fact this was one of the greatest miracles and is a standing testimony to the truth of the Divine origin of his revelations and the reality of revelation itself. Not a single instance of this can be produced from among the followers and companions of any other prophet, not even the followers of Moses and Jesus.

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### THE NEED OF THE HOLY QURAN.

The great object of Islam being to teach the doctrine of the Unity of God, the question has often been asked what was the need of the Holy Quran when the doctrine of Unity had already been revealed to the world in the Taurat (the book of the Law of Moses). In answer to this question it should be borne in the mind that Judaism no doubt originally taught the doctrine of Unity, but Judaism and Christianity at the time of the revelation of the Quran were themselves corrupt, both in practice and doctrine as admitted by some of the European writers themselves. The pure religion of the Unity of God had been departed from, and the doctrine of Unity contained in their books had no practical effect upon the lives of their professors. The grand aim for which man is created and the Word of God revealed, had been utterly lost sight of. The recognition of the Divine Unity consists in a firm belief in the existence of God and His oneness attended with an implicit obedience to him, complete submission to His will and lasting one's self in His love. The Jewish books taught Unity indeed but the inner life of the Jews was not governed by the noble principle of conduct



which underlies the doctrine of the Unity of God, and their hearts were totally devoid of the impression of the true grandeur and glory of God. Outwardly and formally they recognised Unity but their hearts were turned away from purity and under the control of Satan. Their lives were characterised by every form of iniquity such as worldiness, impure thoughts and affections, deceit and falsehood. The honor and greatness due to God was given to priests and hermits and disgraceful deeds were done. Hypocrisy and deceit were predominant in the hearts of those who affected to be the teachers and reformers of people.

Moreover a mere formal recognition of the Unity of God is of no avail if the heart bows down in submission before a thousand different idols. The person who assigns the glory and greatness which is due solely to God, to the means, plans and stratagems which he employs for the realization of an object, or trusts in aught but God or gives a share of the majesty and power of God to his own self or to any other creature, is also an idol-worshipper though he may outwardly confess the Unity of God. Idols are not only images made of stone, brass, gold, silver or any other substance, but every object of the reverence and passionate devotion which is due to God, is an idol in the sight of God. The Jewish sacred books however did not teach this noble significance of the doctrine of Unity and the Quran was, therefore, needed for its revelation to the world. The doctrine of the absolute Unity of God preceding faith or trust in everything else beside God was not known to the world until the Holy Quran revealed it. The adoration and reverence of senseless images is an act to which none but the most ignorant and superstitious would resort, but the most dangerous form of idolatry is that which cannot be easily discovered and which effects and vitiates the whole system like an imperceptible but obstinate disease. This lamentable disease prevailed among the Jews and the Bible *did not* prove an effectual remedy for it, for the Bible did not teach great truth underlying the Unity of God. The general prevalence of this disease moreover required a perfect living exemplar whose life being governed by this practical principle of the absolute Unity of God should have been a guidance and a direction to mankind and a powerful remedy for destroying the disease.



What is the true doctrine of the Unity of God which the Holy Quran requires us to believe in and which is the only way to salvation? It is to believe in God as one and alone in His person, and above every rival or partner whether it is an idol, or a human being, or a heavenly body or one's own-self or one's resources, plans or means, not to regard any one as powerful against Him, not to consider any one as the sustainer, the exalter, the abaser, the helper or the supporter as against the will of God, to love Him alone, to worship Him alone to submit to Him alone, to fear Him alone and to centre all one's hopes in Him alone. There are three requirements for a complete adherence to the doctrine of Unity. Firstly, a man must believe in Unity in the persons of God, *i.e.*, he must regard every thing as vain and naught before God. Secondly, he must believe in Unity in the attributes of God and consider Divinity and Lordship as the attributes of none besides God, looking upon all those who seem to have an authority as having it from Him. Thirdly, there must be unity in the love, sincerity and devotion which he bears to God; in other words, nothing else must have a share of his love and devotion towards God and of the other aspect of his adoration, and he must be completely lost in Him. These three aspects of the Divine Unity had not been taught by any book before the Quran, and that which had been taught by Moses and the Israelite prophets was not acted upon by the Jews and the Christians. The iniquity and gross immorality in which these people indulged at that time is a clear testimony to the truth of the statement that they admitted the existence of God with their lips, but their hearts were utter strangers to this exalting and noble faith. It is for this reason that the Quran condemns both the Jews and the Christians and says that if these people had acted upon the teachings of Moses and Jesus, they would have been granted sustenance both from heaven and from earth. The heavenly sustenance indicates the spiritual blessings which are granted to the righteous and faithful in heart such as heavenly signs, acceptance of prayer visions and inspiration. Here they are also declared as having been deprived of earthly sustenance, because they did not obtain it by just and righteous means but by bending low upon earth and making use of vile means.



Israelite Law, no doubt taught the Unity of God, but the doctrine of Unity taught by it, fell far short of the sublime Unity revealed by the Holy Quran. This defect of teaching in itself called for a new revelation, while the necessity was further enhanced by the spiritual death of those who professed to inculcate this doctrine. The Jewish doctrine of unity, as it was, was in their books and not in their hearts. They, therefore, needed a heavenly teacher who should have breathed the soul of Unity into their hearts, and a warm devotion in place of the dull vapid utterance of formal words. The Jews were dead and life had departed from them on account of the hardness of their hearts and their numerous transgressions. No spark of love for God and not the slightest trace of inclination to spirituality was left in them. Their books on account of their defective teachings and the numerous alterations in their letter and spirit could not inspire a new life into, and furnish a perfect guidance to, their votaries or to the world at large. Therefore, Almighty God sent down His living Word like fresh and timely rain and to this word which gave life did He invite them, that they might find life and salvation being purified through it of their former errors and iniquities. The Holy Quran was, therefore, needed in the first place to teach a living Unity to the lifeless Jews ; secondly, to inform them of their errors ; and thirdly, to throw full light upon all matters relating to eschatology which had been but barely alluded to in the Israelite law.

It is true that the seed of truth was sown with the revelation of Moses while that of Jesus gave the glad tidings of a future when that revelation was to be made perfect. As the seed that grows in a healthy condition gives the glad tidings of good fruits and ears, the Gospel of Jesus gave the glad tidings of the revelation of a perfect law and unerring guide fulfilled in the Holy Quran. The seed which Moses had sown, therefore, ripened with the Quran. The holy book brought with it the perfect blessing which made a clear distinction between truth and falsehood and perfected the religious truths and spiritual verities. This was the purport of Moses' words in Deut. 32 : 2, " the Lord came from Sinai. and rose up from Seir unto them ; He shined forth from mount Paran." In fact the different phases of law were made



perfect only by the Quran. Its two great divisions, the one treating of the relation of man to God and the other of that of man to man, found complete and full development only in the Quran. The object of the Quran was to make the savage a man, to teach the man the highest moral qualities and to make him godly last of all. This function the Holy Book performed with such a success that every other law is a total failure in comparison with it.

The Holy Quran was also needed to settle the differences between the Jews and the Christians relating to Jesus. This it has done in various places. The Jews asserted as against the Christians that their prophet, *i. e.*, Jesus, had been crucified and that, therefore, according to the law of Moses he was accursed and his soul did not rise to heaven. This argument they advanced as conclusive proof that Jesus was a false prophet. The Christians admitted the curse but said that he had been cursed for their sake, and that subsequently the curse being removed, he rose to heaven where God seated him on His right hand. The Quran condemns the views of crucifixion and curse as serious errors. It states that Jesus had neither been crucified nor suffered either a permanent or a temporary curse but that he was raised to heaven. The Mosaic Law makes curse the consequence of a death upon the cross and not of a mere suspension on it which does not result in death. The Quran plainly negatives the death of Jesus upon the cross and consequently his subjection to curse and asserts in clear words his ascension to heaven. Therefore, the Holy Quran refutes both the Jewish and Christian doctrines and asserts that he was not accursed as his enemies and erring friends would have him. Thus did the Holy Quran settle the much vexed question about Jesus, but the Christians do not still admit the need of the Quran. The Quran brought the pure doctrine of the absolute Unity of God, it produced harmony between reason and religion, it carried the doctrine of Unity to its perfection, it furnished clear and conclusive arguments for the Unity and attributes of the Divine Being, it gave reasons based on intellect, history and revelation for the existence of God, it dressed religion which had up to that time no more value than can be given to a story, in scientific clothing, it clothed every doctrine



with true wisdom, it brought to perfection the chain of religious truths which was hitherto imperfect, it took away the curse from Jesus, and it gave evidence of his being a true prophet and of his ascension to heaven to live with the righteous. In the face of these facts, no sensible person would assert that the Quran was not needed.

It should be borne in mind that the Quran has itself clearly proved its need. Thus it says, "Know it that the earth had been dead, and God is now going to restore it to life again." History bear evidence to the fact that immediately before the revelation of the Quran every nation had depraved itself and all the people were sunk deep in vice. Pfender notwithstanding his determined enmity to, and blind prejudice against Islam, also bears testimony to the fact that the Jews and the Christians at the advent of our Holy Prophet were corrupt to the core and led grossly immoral lives, though he adds to explain away the appearance of the Holy Prophet that the coming of a false prophet at the time of a general corruption was a warning to the Christians and Jews who had gone astray to reform themselves. Any one having an ordinary share of intelligence will clearly see that this explanation is simply an absurdity and an impertinence. Put in plain words it means that finding the people of the earth in gross errors and turpitude, God intentionally led them into greater errors and brought about circumstances which led millions of human beings farther away from the right path instead of doing something to bring them back to the truth. Is it true that when God sees the people gone astray, He intentionally leads them to greater destruction, and sends them misleaders and false prophets when they stand in need of true guides and reforms? Do the Divine laws as revealed in external nature lend support to this conclusion, and is it thus that God visits the people in their sufferings and adversities? This is the most blasphemous charge against Divine justice and mercy. To what extreme does the love of this world lead! A weak human being is first called God and then an accursed person! The righteous prophet of God who delivered the world when it was plunged in evil and restored it to life when it was dead, is denied!

What stronger evidence of the need of the Quran



is needed? It came at a time when error raged in the world. It found the world blind and gave it light, it found it in error and gave it guidance, it found it dead and gave it life. The fact that the doctrine of the Unity of God had already been revealed, does not in any way affect the need of the Quran, for as already shown the doctrine of Unity as taught in previous books was very imperfect and did not aim at the high standard revealed by the Holy Quran. Moreover, even in that imperfect condition, it was only upon the lips and not in the hearts of its adherents, and the Holy Quran was, therefore, needed to impress it upon the hearts, and to make it a living principle for action instead of a formula for repetition. The doctrine of Unity had in fact been quite lost and the Quran brought it afresh to the memory of mankind. The reason why the Holy Quran has been termed *zikir* or remembrance is that it brought back to the memory that which had been forgotten.

The argument against the need of the Quran, moreover, applies, if there is the least weight in it, with equal force to the Mosaic Law itself, because the doctrine of Unity was not unknown before the revelation of the Law of Moses. Do not even the Jews and the Christians admit that this doctrine had been first revealed and taught to Adam, then to Seth, Noah, Abraham and the other prophets that went before Moses? The revelation of Moses is, therefore, open to the same objection, viz., that it was not needed when the doctrine of Unity was revealed and known before it. The same eternal and unchangeable God who revealed Himself to Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and Joseph, revealed Himself to Moses, and Moses taught the same Unity which the earlier prophets had taught.

The truth is that the doctrine of the unity and existence of God was not originally taught by the law of Moses but is of ancient origin. We must, therefore, seek the principle which governs its repeated revelation in the world. A cursory glance at the world's history will show that there have been periods in it when the teaching of Unity has been in its wane and men having left to act upon it, the principle has been held in contempt and disregard. Almighty God has on such occasions raised the prophets and vouchsafed fresh revelation to the world in order to deliver people from the evil of



hirk into which they have fallen and to bring them back to righteousness and the Unity of God which they have lost. Thousands of times has the doctrine grown rusty and as many times has it been polished and restored to its original purity. With its rustiness its true worth is hidden from the human eye and accordingly for a time it appears to be quite forgotten. A prophet of God, therefore, again appears to manifest the beauty and light and to dispel the darkness from its face. Thus have light and darkness been gaining the supremacy alternately in the world. The most unfailing test that can be applied to judge the claims of a prophet is to see the time when he appears and the transformation which he works. This is the safest method which a seeker after truth should adopt. He should consider with an unprejudiced mind the condition, both as to principles and actions, of the people among whom a prophet appears before his appearance and after he has done his work. If he comes in time of need and leaves them when that need is satisfied, this is an irrefutable argument of his truth. A prophet is needed to deliver those who are involved in sin in the same manner as a physician is needed to cure the sick.

If any one were to apply this sound test to the claims of our Holy Prophet and compare the pre-Islamic Arabs with the companions of the Holy Prophet, he would be convinced that the Holy Prophet, far excelled all other prophets in his scantifying power, in the wholesomeness of his influence, and in the abundance of his blessings and that the need of the Quran and the Holy Prophet was far more clear and easy of demonstration than the need of any other prophet or book. What great need did Jesus for instance satisfy and what is the proof that he actually did satisfy any need? Did he work any great transformation in the faith, morals and customs of the Jews? Or was he successful in purifying the lives of his chosen apostles? Both questions, we are sorry to note, must be answered in the negative. All that can be proved is that Jesus had gathered about him a number of avaricious men who were guilty of treachery and faithlessness to their master. Was this the effect of teachings which are boasted as unequalled in their sublimity?

It should also be borne in mind that the Gospel teachings have no superiority over the teachings of the



earlier prophets. The teachings contained in the Gospels have on the other hand been all taken from earlier sources including the Talmud. The Jews have always forcibly asserted that there is no originality in the Gospel-teachings but that they are only plagiarisms from Jewish sacred books. (One Jewish author has traced whole passages of the teachings of Jesus in the words of earlier sages. But the Christians while admitting this charge of plagiarism would say that the object of Jesus' mission was not to teach morality but to offer his blood as an atonement for the immoralities of the world and to be subjected to curse. This is however a serious error into which they have fallen. They think that the Law was consummated in the Mosaic Law and that, therefore, the Law revealed in the Quran was not needed. The truth is that since men are apt to forget and be remiss in acting upon moral injunctions which are revealed to them through a prophet, a new prophet is required after some time to re-establish the same principles and make men act upon them. Every new age stands in need of a new reformer and a new magnetiser. But the Quran was not needed only to satisfy these two needs ; it was also needed to bring the teachings of the earlier books to completion and perfection. To take one instance only, the Mosaic Law laid stress upon vengeance only in all cases, while Jesus taught unconditional forbearance and non-resistance. Both these teachings were required by the special circumstances of the time when they were taught but being one-sided they could not furnish rules for all ages. As the teaching of the extreme vengeance of Mosaic Law was abrogated by the Gospel-teaching of extreme forbearance itself required to be modified. Hence the need of the Holy Quran which teaches the middle path in which the punishment of the offender or forbearance ought to be resorted to as the occasion requires. Thus both the Mosaic Law and the Gospels take the extreme course while the Quran teaches the golden mean in all cases. The essence of the teaching in all three books is the same, but the first two laid stress only upon one side of the question owing to the peculiar requirements of the time and the circumstances when and under which they were revealed, and the third, meant as it was for the whole future, led men into the mean path to which



they could for ever stick. The Mosaic Law takes one extreme and the Gospel the opposite, the one requiring vengeance in all cases and the other unconditional forbearance, but the Holy Quran reveals the wise path of acting according to the occasion. The teachings of the Mosaic Law and the Gospel are thus clothed with true wisdom in the Holy Quran. If the Holy Quran had not come, the law revealed in the Mosaic Law and the Gospel would have been like the arrow shot by a blind man which, if it hits the mark once by chance, goes wide a thousand times. In short, the Pentateuch contained law in the form of stories, and the Gospel taught it in the form of parables, while the Holy Quran presented it to seekers after truth clothed in true wisdom.

The excellent teachings revealed in the Holy Quran are, thus, far above those contained in the Bible. Nay, the whole of the Bible cannot stand against a single short chapter of the Holy Quran entitled the *Fatiha* which contains only seven verses and which discloses such vast treasures of spiritual wisdom, excellent religious truths and the highest and most precious verities arranged in natural order and methodical succession of parts as are not to be met with in the books of Moses and Jesus though one should waste his whole life in turning over their pages. The word of God shows its divine origin by the Divine power which lies hidden in it just as His handiwork shows His wonderful skill. It should be further remembered that the Holy Quran contains all the directions which are necessary for the perfection of man. The Bible is like an inn which once afforded lodging and rest to wayfarers but after a time heavy storms and violent earthquakes levelled it with the ground. The great building which had once separate apartments for different functions, lay in such waste and total disorganization that the whole was nothing but a heap of ruins. The Lord of this inn took pity on the travellers, and therefore, prepared a new inn, more spacious than the first and providing every sort of accommodation and all necessities for the comfort of the travellers. In its preparation the Lord of the house while making use of some of the bricks of the old building that lay in ruins, added a great deal of fresh material, in order to provide for every requirement of the travellers. This second inn is the Holy Quran : let every one who has eyes behold,



In connection with the perfection of the teachings revealed in the Holy Quran and the imperfection of those revealed to Moses and Jesus, it is necessary to remove an objection. The incompleteness of the earlier teachings is due not to any defect in the Divine revelation, but to a defect in the capability and capacity of those for whom these teachings were meant. The Israelites to whom the mission of Moses was directed had passed about four hundred years in the slavery of the Pharaohs of Egypt, and under this long subjection to the cruelty and tyranny of their masters, they had become as it were utter strangers to principles of justice and equity. As a general rule, the principles to which the masters of a country adhere, find their way into the subject people. People who are in subjection to a tyrant, must after a time grow tyrants in private, while those who are under a just ruler, must grow just in private. The king is as it were a teacher of his people. The Israelites had for many generations been in the bondage of foreign tyrants and their constant subjection to the tyranny and cruelty of their masters fostered in them a spirit which was quite inconsistent with principles of justice and equality. It was, therefore, the first and primary duty of Moses to indoctrinate them in the principles of justice and hence his teachings laid great stress upon this point. The Pentateuch of Moses is not wholly devoid of the teachings of forbearance and mercy but the vein of justice runs through its pages, and its object is also to put a restraint upon undue cruelty and vindictiveness. Such is not the object of the Gospel. It lays stress upon forgiveness and forbearance. The reason of this is not far to seek. The Jews had carried to excess the doctrine of retaliation taught by the Mosaic Law, and instead of kindness and fellow-feeling, rancor and spite had grown up in their hearts. The teaching of Jesus in the Gospels is evidently addressed to a people whom the speaker knows to be men of a rancorous and vindictive nature and whom he wishes to instruct in the high moral qualities of kindness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness to which they are utter strangers. Hence the propriety of the teachings of Moses and Jesus is unquestionable though it cannot be denied that both doctrines were like special or local laws, and from their very nature unsuitable for permanent and universal adoption. The true



and universal law was revealed in the Holy Quran which abrogated all previous laws. Any one who enters into the spirit of the Holy Book and goes to the depth of its true significance, will clearly see that the Quran has neither laid stress upon strict vengeance as the Mosaic Law did in its doctrine of retaliation and its battles, nor has it gone to the opposite extreme by emphasising absolute and unqualified forgiveness of all injuries, but adopts the middle path by enjoining that which is right and forbidding that which is wrong. It requires us to do that which is right both according to reason and law, and to refrain from doing what reason and law do not permit. The laws and injunctions of the Quran do not, therefore, relate to particular actions but lay down general rules for a right course of conduct. It does not for instance tell us to take an eye for an eye in every case or to forgive every injury however evil its consequences may be, but tells us to apply our reason and judgment to the circumstances of every case and act in a manner which is likely to produce the greatest good. By enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, the Holy Quran has given us general laws for our guidance and thus introduced scientific principles in religious injunctions. Before proceeding to take any step, we are required to consider what will actually be the right way? Whether it is right to forgive or punish, or to give in charity or not to give, is a question of circumstances in each case. According to the Quranic teachings therefore, our primary consideration in every case should be the propriety of the occasion.

We have so far discussed every side of the question relating to the need of the Quran. One point only remains to be considered. Did Islam wage war with the Jews and the Christians to compel them to accept its doctrines? This asserted compulsion has no basis at all. Islam never took the initiative in the battles which it had to fight. It was compelled to take up the sword against those who had either aggressed on it or assisted the aggressors. The jealousy of God was, therefore, moved to punish the offenders. But His mercy still saved from the deserved punishment such as accepted Islam or paid the *jizya*. This favor was also in accordance with the Divine laws, for whenever there is a visitation of God such as a famine or a plague, the hearts of men are naturally turn-



ed to humbleness, repentance, prayers and charitable deeds to avert the Divine punishment. This shows clearly that God Himself inspires into the hearts of men a remedy for averting the evil. The ardent prayers of Moses averted many a time the punishment of the Israelites. In short the Islamic fights were a punishment from God to the aggressors in which the way was still open for repentance and obtaining the mercy of God.

It cannot be denied that the early Muslim wars were not undertaken to compel the Jews and Christians to accept the doctrine of Unity preached by Islam. Wars were resorted to at the express command of the Almighty as a punishment for the offenders who either took up arms against the holy faith for its extirpation or assisted the aggressors or laid obstructions in the way of Islam intending to hinder its progress. These three causes necessitated a severe chastisement of the offenders and Almighty God willed that it should be effected by means of the sword. Another unjust and unwarrantable charge against Islam is that it preached peace during the first thirteen years under the most cruel tortures and persecutions of its enemies because it lacked force at that time, but that as soon as it had sufficient force to make its appearance in the field of battle it declared war. Such a charge would have had some foundation if the opponents of the Holy Prophet had not committed the heinous deeds of cruelty and innocent bloodshed or plotted to take away his life as they did at Mecca, and the prophet had left Mecca of his own accord and not on account of their evil designs. The slightest acquaintance with the circumstance of the Prophet's life at Mecca, would convince every sensible person of the unreasonableness of such a supposition. Even the enemies of Islam cannot deny—nay they have borne testimony to the fact—that the Holy Prophet met the rejection and persecutions of his enemies with great fortitude and strictly enjoined forbearance of evil upon his companions. There was no end to the severe persecutions of his enemies. They shed the blood of many an innocent person and inflicted wounds and injuries upon whomsoever they could lay their hands on. An attack upon the Prophet himself was at last plotted to bring the whole movement to an end. At this critical moment, Almighty God led His messenger out of all danger to Medina and



gave him the glad tidings that those who had taken up the sword against Islam would perish by the sword. Do these circumstances lend the least support to the cruel charge that the Prophet was from the very commencement bent upon war and that this cherished idea took a practical shape when he found himself at the head of an army at Medina? Is it not true that when the Meccans advanced towards Medina, and were met by the Muslims at the famous field of Badr, the ranks of the Muslims contained no more than 313 men of whom very few had any experience of war and the majority were young men who had never fought a battle before? Nay among these three hundred and thirteen were also boys who had not yet grown to manhood. Could this small number of raw young men be relied upon as a sufficient force to meet the sturdy warriors and Bedouin hordes of the whole idolatrous Arabia and the thousands of Jews and Christians who were bent upon extirpating the new faith? Could a general ever make his appearance in the field with such scanty material to deal destruction to innumerable foes? Does it not clearly prove that the Prophet was obliged to take the sword in obedience to the commandment of God and not to fulfil any plan which he had concerted? Had it been his plan he would have first collected a force of thirty or forty thousand strong and then made his appearance into the field of battle?

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#### AN ARGUMENT FOR THE TRUTH OF THE HOLY QURAN AND THE HOLY PROPHET.

The Holy Quran has asserted in the most emphatical terms that it is the Word of God and that our Lord and Master, the Holy Prophet Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is God's true prophet on whom the Holy Word descended. These assertions are set forth clearly in the following verses of the Quran. "God is He who has not his equal; He is the source of all life and existence; He has sent his book to thee with truth and truly to satisfy a need." And again "O people, our apostle has come to you when he was truly needed." "At a time of true and long-felt need have We revealed our Word and it has come to you when your (social, moral and spiritual) states stood in urgent need of it." "O people! this sure argument has come to



you and We have sent to you a manifest light." "O Prophet! say to the people, I have been sent as an apostle to you all." "And as to those who believed and did righteous deeds and believed in the Word that has been revealed to Mohammad and the same is a true revelation, God shall forgive their sins and better their state." Similar other verses abound in the Quran in which it has been asserted in clear words that the Holy Quran is the Word of God and the Prophet Mohammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, is His true prophet. This will suffice for the present, but at the same time we challenge the advocates of all other religions to produce in the first place similar emphatic assertions of the truth of the principles they adhere to, from their own revealed books. For, it should be borne in mind, it is the first requirement of a revealed book that it should claim a Divine source for itself and if it hesitates to declare itself so, it is absurd for others to hold or declare it as such.

But the important point to which we wish to draw the reader's attention is that the Quran has not simply claimed a Divine origin for itself and a true heavenly mission for the Prophet Mohammad, but it has also proved that statement with the most strong and cogent arguments, and it is here that all other books with any pretensions to being the revealed Word of God cannot stand the test which the Holy Quran so admirably puts and satisfies. Here we would mention only one of the several arguments that the Quran has produced to support its assertions and leave it for the reader to compare the Quran with religious books of other creeds so far as this argument goes. The opponents of Islam are requested to produce a similar arguments bearing upon the truth of their own systems and place it before the public, or if they cannot do this, publish the fact and admit that their books are devoid of such an effective proof. We can declare it with certainty that all other religious systems are wanting in the method of proof we have here stated as being a characteristic of the Holy Quran.

Let us now consider the first argument to which reference has been made above. It will be admitted on all hands by far the most important indication of a revealed book and of a true prophet of God is their need. In other



words, they should appear at a time when darkness prevails over the face of the earth, when the unity of God, righteousness, justice and knowledge vanish away, and idolatry, moral depravity, iniquity and ignorance prevail in their stead, and when a reformer is badly needed. It is also necessary that a prophet should only depart from the world when he has brought about the desired reformation and established a state of things calculated to promote the moral ideas and welfare of the people, and so long as his work is not finished and transformation has not been brought about, he should be protected from his enemies by the hand of the Almighty. In short, like servants, he should both come and as it were under orders. A heavenly mission is established and an apostle raised when circumstances create a necessity for it and time bears witness to the need of one, and he is called back under a prophetic revelation when the plant of reformation is firmly rooted and a mighty revolution has taken place.

So far we have dealt with the argument generally. Now we will show how far it applies particularly to the circumstances under which the Holy Prophet Mohammad appeared and was called back. The Prophet claimed to have been sent for all nations of the earth, and the Holy Quran has condemned all the nations for setting up with God other gods and for corruption and moral depravity. Thus it says. "The land and the sea have both become corrupt. (gone astray). And again, "We have sent thee that thou mayest be a warner to all people that they have been adjudged guilty in the eye of the Lord on account of their beliefs and demoralization."

It should be born in mind that the word "warn" used here is sure indication that the Holy Quran asserted the whole world to be corrupted and to have gone astray from the path of truth and righteousness, since admonition is only for the corrupt and the vicious who are prewarned as to the dangerous consequences of their evil doings. Warning has nothing to do with the righteous, for the prophets of God bring good tidings to the faithful servants of God and warning to the transgressors. When, therefore, a prophet is described as a warner to the whole world, it follows that the Word of God revealed to that prophet declares the whole world to be in a state of moral turpitude. Such an assertion



has neither been made of Moses in the Pentateuch, nor of Jesus in the Gospels, but only of our holy Prophet in the Quran. In one place we have : "Before We sent our apostle to you, you were on the verge of a pit of fire." The Quran also warned the Jews and Christians that they had faithlessly altered the books of God and taken lead in every sort of mischief and vice. It reproached the idolators again and again for worshiping human beings, stones, elements and stars, for misappropriating the properties of orphans, murdering infants, violating the rights of relations and for excesses of every sort. It then says : "Know it for certain that the earth was all dead and God shall now restore it to life." In short, the Quran adjudged the whole world as guilty of setting up false gods, idolatry and transgression, the main springs in which all evils take their rise. It emphatically declared the Jews and the Christians to be the *fons et origo* of the evils of the world and dwelt at length upon their corruptions. The Holy Quran shows that the world then presented a hideous picture which was all darkness and deformity without a speck of beauty.

We have here referred to a very few verses of the Holy Quran bearing on the subject in hand for the sake of brevity. But the Quran almost teems with verses describing most effectively how the whole world had been given to corruption, how the earth had become a dead mass without a spark of life and how the people had reached the very verge of the pit of fire. The Quran repeatedly exhorts the Prophet to warn the world that it had fallen into a seriously dangerous state. Even a cursory glance at the pages of the Quran would show that the whole world at that time was totally immersed in darkness and stinked with the noxious evils of idolatry, setting up false gods and other transgressions and abominations. The Gospels, no doubt, speak of the mischiefs and transgressions of the Jews but Jesus is nowhere reported to have said that all the people on the face of the earth had become corrupt and morally depraved, nor did he ever claim to be an apostle to all the nations of the earth. The sphere of his actions was limited to a small section of the Jews. nor were his exhortations addressed to any but the inhabitants of a few villages of the Jewish tribe. In bold contrast with this, the Quran plainly asserts the whole



world as involved in ignorance and darkness, the whole earth as dead with every sort of sin, and all the nations as having gone astray. The Jews of the time of Jesus, however deficient in acting upon the precepts of the Old Testament, believed in its inspirations, but when the Quran undertook the work of reformation, it had to correct not only the transgressions of the law but also the false principles and dangerous beliefs then prevalent. Atheism then prevailed in all its force, vast numbers rejected the inspiration and revelations of God, and those who accepted a Creator of the universe were immersed in evils of every sort. The world had gone astray in doctrine and practice alike. Thus while the mission of Jesus was limited to his own small community, and he only enumerated some of the mischiefs of his own tribe, thereby also showing the limits of his purpose, the mission of the Prophet of Islam was directed to the whole world as also appears from the Holy Quran mentioning a general corruption of the whole world. The appearance, therefore, of the Prophet at the time of a universal depravity and general corruption, and his being called back after working a thorough transformation, are, with the additional fact of the Quran itself presenting both sides of this argument and directing attention to it in forcible words, matters which one would vain turn over the pages of history or revelation to find elsewhere.

It is, we think, hardly necessary to describe in detail the various corruptions and false beliefs of the various nations of the earth; suffice it to say on this point that this statement of the Quran is amply borne out by a perusal of the history of the time. The admission of every people as to their own state, strongly corroborates the statement of the Quran as to the darkness of that age when every nation had given up the worship of the Creator for that of the creatures. It is for this reason that when the Quran declared all nations to have gone astray and to have been morally corrupt, none could clear itself of the guilt. In contrast with their silence and admission take the decided and peremptory words of the Quran which describe the moral death and spiritual lethargy of the people. How expressive is the following injunction: "The Muslims ought to avoid the course of conduct adopted by the Ahl-i-Kitab. They



were entrusted with the Word of God before them, but after the lapse of a period their hearts were hardened and most of them are transgressors and practisers of evil deeds. Know it also that the earth had been dead and God is now again restoring it to life. These are the signs of the need of the Holy Quran and of its truth which We have described that you may understand them." Thus we have stated one part of the argument and shown that the Quran itself brings it forward, and to direct attention to it closes it with the words: "It is a sign that the Quran and the Prophet come from God which we have stated that you may think and arrive at the right conclusion."

Now we shall consider the second part of the argument, *viz.*, that the Prophet of God was called back from this world, to his heavenly Master after he had fully performed the business for which he came. The Quran affords ample proof of this and says: "This is the day that I have brought your faith to perfection by giving you the perfect Quran and by working a complete transformation in your souls, and completed my blessings upon you and chosen the faith of Islam for you." The purport of this is that the revelation of the Quran was made complete, the holy Word of God effected the most wonderful transformation in capable souls, perfected their training and completed heavenly blessings upon them. Now this verse states in clear and precise language that the Prophet's death did not take place until the faith of Islam had been made consummate by a complete delivery of the Quran and a thorough regeneration of souls. It should also be noticed that it is the companions of the Prophet who are addressed in this verse of the Holy Quran, indicating thereby that the verse did not simply refer to a complete delivery of the Quran but to the thorough transformation of souls that had been effected in the companions and to the completion of the blessings upon them, the mission of the Prophet thus attaining the desired goal. This is, moreover, a criterion of the truth of heavenly mission and such success is never granted to a false claimant. Nay, before the time of our Holy Prophet, not even the true prophets attained to the excellence and the height of success which is observable in the case of our Prophet. No instance can be mentioned of any other reformer in



whose case the revealed book should have so peacefully been completed on the one hand and a thorough change from iniquity to rectitude effected so successfully and in such large numbers on the other, and in addition to this unbelief should have so hopelessly been overthrown and the true faith so firmly established and so successfully victorious.

Again, the Quran has in another place, "When the promised help of God and victory came to thee and thou sawest the people enter into the religion of God (*i.e.*, accept the faith of Islam) in vast numbers, praise thou God and sanctify His name and seek His protection, for He comes with mercy upon man." In this verse we are informed that the object which the Prophet of God had in view was attained, *viz.*, people entered into Islam by thousands. The verse in other words refers to the near end of the worldly career of the Prophet, and so it happened, for within one year of this revelation the Prophet died. It also appears from this verse that the Prophet of God had it at heart that he should see the spread of Islam in his life-time, and it was most disagreeable to his feelings that he should have departed before the mission he had brought, had firmly established. In this verse, therefore, God give His Prophet the good tidings that He had fulfilled all his desires inasmuch as Islam had taken a firm root in the very life-time of its founder. Every prophet more or less had this object at heart but as they had not the same strong feeling and assiduity, the happy news proferred to our Prophet in these verses was given to none, not even to Moses or Jesus but to one and one only of whom the Quran says: "Shalt thou kill thyself with the anxiety that these people do not believe."

From all this we see that the clearest proof is afforded of the truth of the Quran of the mission of the Prophet by the circumstance that the Prophet appeared to fill a need strongly and generally felt by the world and was not recalled from his office until he had firmly established the truth. At his appearance with his prophetic mission he clearly proved his need to the world and adjudged all the nations guilty of setting of false gods, of wickedness and of transgression. The Quran teems with instances of this. To add one to the list already given, take: "Highly blessed is He



who revealed the Quran to His servant that he may warn the whole world and admonish them for their going astray from the right path and adhering to false beliefs." The verse prove by itself that the Quran asserted the appearance of the Prophet to have taken place at a time when all the nations of earth had become corrupt, and those who were so described by the Word of God set seal to the truth of these words not only by their silence in opposition to such a bold assertion of the Quran but also by own confession of guilt. This clearly shows that as the corruption of world at that time was a general and complete one, so a reformer of equally extraordinary powers was needed to restore the proper order of things. Hence the Prophet appeared at a time when a true and great prophet—the greatest of prophets indeed—was needed and expected. As the argument is without a flaw in respect to the appearance of our Holy Prophet, it is equally sound with respect to his departure. A great many verses of the Quran show that the Prophet went back to his heavenly Master after his teachings had been made perfect and all that was needed in religion had been communicated with care and accuracy. Before his death also the Prophet was informed that assistance from heaven was granted to his faith in all its fullness, and people embraced Islam in large numbers. Verses were also revealed showing that God had strongly impressed faith and righteousness upon their hearts and made them detest all sorts of iniquity and oppression. They were invested with the best and most excellent moral virtues and a radical change marked their lives and their course of conduct. Then followed the revelation of the chapter named Victory as a message from the most High that the object of the Prophet's mission was entirely fulfilled and Islam had won the hearts of the people. Upon this the Prophet publicly announced that the chapter hinted at his approaching death, Immediately afterwards he performed the pilgrimage which he called the farewell pilgrimage, to Mecca, and on the back of a camel delivered a lengthy speech to the assembled multitude which could only be counted by thousands. At the close of the speech he addressed the whole audience in the following words: "O people of God! My Lord entrusted me with all these commandments that I may deliver



them to you. Do you then bear witness that I have delivered the message of the most High and fulfilled my mission ?" The whole multitude replied in one voice : "Yes, you have delivered the message of the Lord to us." Then the Prophet of God looked thrice to heaven each time saying : "O God, I beseech Thee bear Thou witness to this." Again addressing the people he said that the reason of his calling upon them to bear witness to his delivering of the Divine message was that perhaps, the following year they shall not see him there amongst them. So fully satisfied the success of his mission and in glory, he left his companions for his eternal journey a few months later at Medina.

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## FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF THE MUSLIM FAITH.

The first fundamental principal of the faith of Islam is the recognition of Divine Unity, but it should be borne in mind that a mere belief in the Unity of God is not sufficient. One should never be contented that one is called a Muslim and believes in the formula that 'there is no god but God.' Those who have read the Holy Quran know it well that Almighty God is not pleased with lip-profession. It is the heart to which God looks because the heart is the seat of the Almighty. In the Holy Quran Almighty God speaks of the Jews as a favored people to whom great blessings were granted. But another time came upon them when their beliefs became lip-beliefs only, and the words which they uttered with their mouths had no access to their hearts, because while there was faith on their lips, their hearts were full of evil ideas, dishonesty and faithlessness. Hence Almighty God sent upon them punishments of various sorts. They had still the books of the prophets with them in which they expressed their belief and they believed also in the prophets, but they found no favour in the sight of God because the words they uttered were upon their lips and their hearts did not realize the meaning of those words. Bear in mind, then, that Almighty God is not pleased with the words of the mouth when the heart is devoid of true purity. Remember this, and let not a mere profession of belief in God de-



ceive you, for the faith that is on the tongue and not in the heart is an impure and powerless faith. It cannot serve any purpose, neither in this life nor in the next. Almighty God is not pleased until He sees that a man has banished from his heart all ideas except the idea of God and turns solely to Him and sets greater value upon his faith than upon the things of this world. You may deceive men by outward deeds of prayers, fasting and almsgiving when your heart is devoid of the true spirit of these virtuous deeds, but you cannot deceive God by your dry and spiritless formalities. That you repeat the formula of faith and are known as believers in the Unity of God has no value in the sight of God.

It is the meaning of formula of faith which you should know and act upon. When a person says there is no god but God,' he professes with his tongue and believes with his heart that none except God deserves to be worshipped. The *ilah* translated "god" really means in Arabic the "object of love, worship and desire." The formula *la ilaha illallah*, "there is no god but God" which has been taught to the Muslims as a proclamation of the Unity of God is really the essence of the Holy Quran. It means that unless God is made the true object of a man's love, desire and worship, and unless Divine glory and majesty reign supreme in a man's heart so that he is prepared to sacrifice every worldly interest for the sake of God, he cannot attain to the supreme bliss and eternal happiness known as salvation. There is a tradition of the Holy Prophet according to which "whoever says that there is no god but God shall enter into paradise." The meaning of these words has been greatly misunderstood. The tradition does not mean as many people think that the utterance of the above-mentioned words with the tongue is sufficient for the attainment of salvation. Almighty God sees the hearts and mere words have no importance in His sight. The tradition signifies that when a man fully realizes the significance of the words *la ilaha illallah*, and the majesty and glory of God fully enter into his heart, he enters into a paradise. The realization of the signification of these words involves that a man should have no object of love besides God, nor any object of worship or desire besides Him. True and sincere faith in the Unity of God and



acting in practice upon the true significance of the formula of the faith is that stage in the spiritual progress of man upon reaching which a man becomes a saint or the beloved one of God. Be not proud that you do not worship an idol or a human being, for idol-worship and human-worship are evils of a gross type and are avoided by every man of common sense. Even the Hindu who has for centuries remained steeped in the grossest idol-worship has now begun to hate it, and the worshippers of Jesus are also beginning to see their errors. But Islam does not stop there, and when it inculcates a belief in the Unity of God, it does not require us simply to avoid idol-worship or human-worship. It requires us to completely forsake all those false idols which we have made in our hearts. For instance, to follow one's desire or to gratify one's passions or to follow evil courses are really so many idols which men are worshipping. The faith of Islam, "there is no god but God," rejects these idols as well, and considers them great hinderances to the spiritual progress of man. In Islam there is a negation of all gods besides God, whether those gods may be the false idols within a man's heart or actual images made of stone. What is required is that the heart should be purified for the love and reverence of one Being only. Nay, it is easy to forsake the worship of stone-idols, but idols of desires assume various disguises and remain hidden in the deepest depths of the heart. There was a time when idol-worshippers have now become Muslims and even the Hindus who stick to their old faith are beginning to hate idol-worship. This is because the errors of idol-worship are plain enough. But the other form of idol-worship is a far more dangerous disease. The idols within the heart of a man are not seen by the physical eye, and even philosophic minds are misled by the disguises which they assume. It is through the microscope of Divine grace only that they can be seen. And so long as they occupy the heart, it cannot become the seat of the Almighty. Their harm is the greater on account of their very nature. These idols are the desires and passions for whose gratification a man infringes both Divine and human rights. Some people trust the efficiency of means and resources to such an extent as to exclude all ideas of God. They may profess a belief in God and express hatred for idols, but



their means and resources are really their idols. Unless all these idols are swept off, true Unity of God can never be established in the heart.

Many people would ask, 'Do we not believe in the Unity of God?' My answer to them is that they do not believe in the Unity of the God if their hearts still follow their own desires and rely on their own resources. A belief in the Unity of God is not a meaningless thing. It has a wonderful effect upon the human life and this effect can be witnessed clearly in the practical life of the man who with his whole heart and true sincerity believes in the Unity of God. What I say to you is my own experience : let him who will accept it. It pains me to see even among Muslims those who do not accept the Unity of God to which He invites them. A belief in the Unity of God requires us to be most regardful of the rights of His creatures. Therefore the person who violates his brother's right is not a believer in the Unity of God. So long as jealousy, enmity, hypocrisy, dishonesty, &c., are met with in a man's relations with his fellow-men, his profession of the Unity of God is not sincere and does not proceed from his heart. For unless a man shows in his practice that he has forsaken all gods and all objects of love, worship and desire, a profession with the lips is an utterly useless thing. A man can never be pure in heart unless he first destroys all the false idols which like rats on earth affect it with a plague. It is in this that the distinctive superiority of Islam lies, for as regards the mere belief in the Unity of God, there are Unitarians even among the Christians, and the Aryas, the Brahmos and the Jews too profess a belief in the Unity of God.

The Unity of God is the first and foremost principle of Islam. Having expressed myself briefly on the true nature of this doctrine, we will say a few words about the prayers enjoined by the Muslim law which form the second pillar of the faith of Islam. The importance of the injunction relating to prayers can be understood easily from the frequent repetition of that injunction in the Holy Quran. But the Holy Book at the same time warns the Muslims against a misconception or ignorance of the true nature of prayers, for it says : "Woe is to those who pray but are utterly regardless of the true nature of their prayers." Prayers are a supplication addressed to Almighty God by a man to purify him and to make



him attain union with Him, for unless a man is purified by the hand of God, he cannot be pure, and unless Almighty God makes him attain His union by His powerful hand, he cannot find it. Many are the chains and fetters with which a man is bound, and his own exertions, however hard, are not sufficient to liberate him from them. He desires that he may become purified, but his efforts without the helping hand of God are of no avail, and sometimes he does stumble. purify one from sins is the work of God only and there is no other power on the earth's surface which can bring about that object. Hence Almighty God has enjoined prayers that they may be the means of bringing about a pure transformation and creating help promptings and pure impulses within a man's heart. Prayers are a humble and earnest supplication to Almighty God that evil desires, evil passions and evil impulses may be suppressed and a pure love and a pure connection with the Divine Being may be generated in their place which should enable a man to walk in obedience to Divine commandments. The word used for prayers in the Muslim Law is *Salate*, and the presence of the idea of burning in the root meaning shows the prayer is not the utterance of certain words with the lips, but that true prayer should be accompanied with a burning of the heart for the attainment of the object prayed for. Very few persons are acquainted with the philosophy of prayer. A kind of death comes over the person who sets himself to pray for the attainment of an object. It is then that prayer is accepted. But very few persons know this. We hear men complain that they prayed for an object, but that their prayer was not accepted. They do not know that the utterance of certain words with the lips is not prayer. It is a necessary condition for the acceptance of prayer that the heart should completely melt before God, and the grace of God should be sought with patience and perseverance. Such prayers are generally accepted. The daily prayers which are enjoined by the Muslim Law afford to a Muslim the best occasion for addressing his supplications to God, but the Muslims are unaware of their blessing. It is due to ignorance that the different sects have invented different forms of devotion for seeking the nearness of God. It is through prayers only that His nearness is attained, and this was the way which the Holy Prophet



followed. It is our personal experience that nothing can make a man attain that nearness of God which can be attained through prayers. All the movements in prayers are expressive of the deepest humbleness before God. First we stand with our hands folded on the breast, as a servant stands respectfully before his lord and master, expressing by this attitude that like a humble servant, we are ready to obey all the Divine commandments. Next we bend low before Him as a servant does before his master and thus express our further humbleness while we praise the holiness and greatness of God. The highest degree of humbleness which is expressive of utter human weakness in the majestic Divine presence is shown in the act of prostration. The tongue utters the praises of God and thus while the words express His glory and greatness, the heart shows its sincerity in this praise and glorification of the mighty Lord of earth and heavens by the physical act of prostration. The physical movements of the body in prayers are therefore only practical expressions of the deep humbleness of the heart and both the tongue and the heart, the body as well as the soul, join in singing praises of the glory and greatness of God and expressing by words as well as practice the utter weakness and humility of man.

As there is a deep significance beneath the physical movement of the body in the prayers, so there is a hidden meaning in the five times appointed by the Islamic law for the five daily prayers. They represent the five conditions of man. They are photographs of man's changing conditions. The life of man is subject to five different changes which he undergoes in the time of adversity. These five changes are necessary to human nature. First of all he is informed of the misfortune that is going to befall him, as, for instance, when a warrant is issued from a court of justice for his arrest. For the first time then his comfort and happiness are suddenly interrupted and a cloud of melancholy is cast over his sunshine of glory. This stage corresponds to the time for the first prayer immediately after noon. As the sun begins to decline from the zenith after noon, so a man who is at the height of his prosperity and success witnesses the stage of his declination when he comes to know of an impending misfortune. This stage of the human condition finds its representation in the



prayer which is said at the first decline of the sun, *i.e.*, the *zuhr* prayer. The sun declines farther to the west and the troubles increase. In the illustration already stated, the person upon whom the warrant is executed is brought before the magistrate. Difficulties then encompass him all around, and the light of comfort is on the verge of extinction. Corresponding to this state of man is the time of the day when the sun has declined far to the west and his light is turned pale so that the eye can rest upon him. The zenith of glory is left far behind and the setting of the sun after a short time is apparent. The later after-noon prayer, *i.e.*, 'asr, answers to this spiritual state. A third change then comes over the man. There is no hope left of being delivered from the trouble. To continue the illustration already suggested, evidence being taken against the accused person which shows his guilt, a charge is framed by the magistrate. He is then frightened out of his senses and deems himself already a prisoner. The son of glory is then set. This state corresponds to the time when the sun actually sets and the light of the day vanishes away. The evening prayer said after sunset represents the condition. The culminating point of adversity is reached when darkness encompasses a man all around, and its force is fully realized. The verdict goes against him and he is sent to goal. Then there is before him the darkness of night. Corresponding to this state of physical adversity are the night-prayers which are said when the darkness of night fully sets in. This long interval of darkness is again followed by a light in the East which gives news of the rising sun. The period of imprisonment is over, and the sun of prosperity again begins to shine upon the man. In accordance with this change the next prayer-time is the morning which brings the glad tidings of the new sun.

The third principal injunction of the Muslim law is fasting. There are some men who say that changes must be introduced into these practices. They are spiritually blind and ignorant of the deep wisdom which underlies every injunction given by Almighty God. Fasting is necessary for the perfect purity of the soul. It is presumptuous on the part of those who have never walked in the spiritual paths to suggest reforms in these paths. They are engrossed day and night with their worldly



affairs and their whole lives pass in temporal concerns. How absurd on their part then to handle matters religious notwithstanding their absolute ignorance about them. The fact is that the suffering of hunger and reducing the quantity of food which one generally takes is an essential stop in the spiritual progress of man. It strengthens the visionary power of man. Man does not live by bread alone. And after this life there is another and eternal life to neglect which is to separate oneself entirely from God. The man who fasts should bear in mind that fasting does not mean only abstaining from food for a stated time. Its true significance is that man should abstain from every kind of evil. In fact, food is a thing which Almighty God has not forbidden but He has forbidden evil. If then He requires us to abstain while fasting from that which he has not ordinarily forbidden, how much more necessary it is that we should abstain from that which He has forbidden. When keeping fast, you should remember God much. The practice of the Holy Prophet shows that the Ramazan is particularly the month of Divine worship. Therefore let your abstinence from food during these days serve as a step for the engrossment of your ideas with the worship of God, so that cutting off all ordinary connections with the physical world, you, may enjoy the blessings of the spiritual world. Woe to him who found the physical bread and did not care for the spiritual bread. As the physical bread sustains the physical life in man, so the spiritual bread sustains the spiritual life of man and breathes vital power into the spirit. Seek assistance from God, for by His grace are the doors opened.

The fourth pillar of Islam is *Zakat* or giving of large alms. The Arabic word signifies purification, and therefore by this injunction also Islam aims at purity. There are many people who give alms and make charitable gifts, but they do not care whether they earn money by fair or foul means. But the institution of *zakat* in Islam requires only a stated share of that which has been earned fairly and without doing any wrong to others. *Zakat* is the giving in the way of God out of one's fair earnings which are thus purified. What Islam aims at teaching by this institution is that man should not so love the wealth of this world as to feel it difficult to



part with it in the way of God. On one occasion the Holy Quran says : " By no means can you attain to righteousness until you spend in the way of God out of what you love." The reason for this injunction is that unless a man learns to sacrifice his dearest interests for the sake of God, he cannot be said to have preferred the side of God to this world. When we compare the state of the Muslims of our time with the companions of the Holy Prophet, a sad contrast is brought to light. There is nothing in the world which is dearer to a man than his own life, but the companions willingly sacrificed their lives for the sake of God. They had also wives and children to look after, but they loved to sacrifice themselves and everything they had in the way of God.

The fifth pillar of the Muslim faith is the pilgrimage to Mecca. The pilgrimage represents the last stage for the spiritual wayfarer. In the highest stage of spiritual advancement the spiritual wayfarer has all his lower connections entirely cut off and he is completely engrossed with Divine love. The true lover finds his highest satisfaction in sacrificing his very heart and soul for the beloved one's sake, and the circuit round the house of God is an emblem or external manifestation of it. Corresponding to the Divine temple on earth, there is a Divine temple on heaven and a circuit round the temple on earth is useless a circuit is made round the heavenly temple also. The pilgrim who makes a circuit round the Ka'ba takes off all his clothes and wears only one garment, but the spiritual pilgrim throws off all his superficial garments and comes into Divine presence with a heart quite naked because it has been freed from every trammel. The pilgrim shows by the external act of making circuit round the Ka'ba that the fire of Divine love has been kindled within his heart, and like true love he makes circuits round the house of his beloved one. He shows in fact that he has lost his own will and completely surrender it to that of his beloved master and that he has sacrificed all his interests for His sake. Such is the true meaning of the Hajj or pilgrimage in the Islamic law, and every body who undertakes to go on a pilgrimage should bear in mind that unless he realize the full significance of the pilgrimage, and unless the bodily act of pilgrimage is



accompanied with the spiritual pilgrimage, his performance of the rites of the pilgrimage is only a lifeless ceremony devoid of all meaning. But many people perform the pilgrimage only to be called pilgrims and spend their foully earned wealth for a visit to the holy places. Almighty God does not accept their pilgrimage, for they are only crusts without any essence.

## THE SALAT OR THE MUSLIM PRAYERS.

There exists a great misunderstanding with respect to the nature of the prayers enjoined by the Muslim Law. The prayer of a Muslim is a prayer in the truest and highest sense of the term, a devout supplication to Almighty God and a reverential expression of the soul's sincerest desires before its Maker. But on account of the great ignorance that prevails among the Muslims, prayers are looked upon as a burdensome duty. Does Almighty God stand in need of imposing tax upon His creatures? Certainly not; for He is above all needs and able to dispense with all creatures. Almighty God has commanded men to pray to Him and utter His praise, not because He stands in need of it, but for their own good, for only thus can they attain the great object for which man has been created. It grieves us to see that men have no love for piety, righteousness and the worship of God. The true devotion of the heart has degenerated into a lifeless ceremonial. The love of God is on the wane and the heavenly enjoyment in his worship is nowhere felt. There is taste and flavour in everything and most of all in prayers and in the worship of the Divine Being. But as the sweetest thing would excite a bitter taste in the mouth of one whose organs of taste are morbid, similarly prayers and worship do not afford any pleasure or enjoyment to those who are spiritually sick. The object of man's life has been described in the Holy Quran to be the worship of God, and it is impossible that man should have been so created as to feel a pleasure in everything except in that which was the aim of his life. Nay, it is here that he should experience the highest bliss, and if he does not, he should clearly understand that some morbidity affects his spiritual conditions and he ought to seek for the proper remedy.



We see it in our every-day experience that the things that have been created for the benefit of man possess a certain attraction for him. Are not delicious articles of food and drink pleasant to the taste, beautiful objects and sights and charming scenes pleasing to the eye, and sweet sound and soft and melodious tones pleasing to the ear? What other argument is needed to show that the observance of religious duties must afford pleasure and enjoyment to a man? Again man and woman were created as helpmates to each other, and the one was consorted with the other not by compulsion but by means of attraction placed in each for the other. The coupling of the man and the woman with the object of procreation has thus been brought about by the pleasure which each finds in the union, and the purpose could hardly have been accomplished without it. The enjoyment which is found in the sexual connection and which is the incentive to men to propagate their kind, has such a powerful attraction that ignorant men have taken it to be the object of the sexual connection and have lost sight of the real object, *viz.*, procreation. The object with which the close connection between man and woman was brought about was no doubt the propagation of their kind, and the enjoyment found in the connection was only a step to the attainment of that object.

The true and eternal union which affords the highest bliss is the union of man with God. It gives a pleasure which is far above every pleasure of the senses. But the unfortunate man who does not find any pleasure in this union and who regards the worship of God as a tax, has not his spiritual faculties sound and in a regular order, and is like the sick man who finds no pleasant savor in sweet things, or the blind man who finds no charm in beautiful objects, or the impotent man who finds no pleasure in the sexual union. But, alas for the spiritual lethargy which so generally prevails. The sick man who finds no enjoyment in his food consults the doctor and incurs every expenditure for the cure of his disease, and the impotent man who is deprived of the pleasure of sexual union is ready sometimes to commit suicide but the hardened heart which finds no pleasure in the worship of God does nothing to heal itself and to open itself for the Divine blessings. Why does not this great grief gnaw his



soul? He is mad after the pleasures of this world, but there is no thirst in his soul for eternal bliss, no yearning after heavenly enjoyment. Does he think that temporal pleasures can be restored to him when he has been deprived of them, but that Almighty God has made no provision for spiritual and eternal pleasure? God has certainly made such provision, but for those who seek it and try for it as they try for the remedies of physical diseases.

The Holy Quran has on one occasion compared the faithful to virtuous women and this simile has a deep significance. The close connection which exists between man and woman serves to exemplify the connection between God and His faithful servant. The union of woman with man is blessed and faithful if it is characterized by love and concord. Discord and disagreement, on the other hand, are not only fatal to the peace of the household, leading to the corruption of both the man and the woman and to diseases which impair the health of the pair permanently, but also rendered the object of the union a certain failure. Any disturbance in the true union is productive of immense harm and mischief. Such is also the case of the spiritual union of man with God. The person who cuts asunder his connection from his heavenly Master; has his heart cankered and vitiated. His suffering is very great and knows no end. Again, as there is pleasure in the sexual union of man and woman for the production of new life, so there is bliss in the spiritual union of man and God for an immortal life. The bliss that is felt in the spiritual union far transcends all earthly and material enjoyments, and has nothing comparable to it in the pleasure of the senses. If the men of this world who are given to the worldly pleasures taste but once of this heavenly bliss, they would forget all their former pleasures for its sake. But what is to be deplored is the ignorance of most men as regards the source of this heavenly enjoyment. Their genuflexions and prostrations are not accompanied with the bowing down of the soul on the Divine threshold and hence their prayers are meaningless movements of the body. They perform their religious exercise with an absent mind, and their prayers have no other significance than sitting and rising alternately. It grieves me still more when I see people resorting to prayers that they



may be seen of men and revered and honored among them; and their insincere prayers make them successful in the attainment of this mean object. Ah, ignorant souls! they never think that if their false prayers can make them honorable in the eyes of men, would not true and sincere prayers make them honorable in the sight of God?

In short, indifference to prayers and remissness in them are due only to an ignorance of the pleasure and enjoyment with which true and sincere prayers are attended. In large cities and in villages, in the mad race for wealth and in the heat of business, people can hardly find time to bow down in submission before their Master, and those that go through the external acts of devotion have their hearts in their business and not in the prayers which they offer. There is hardly any one who can bow down his head in true submission and with his whole heart and soul. What is the cause of this spiritual lethargy and indifference to religion? Nothing but that people are unaware of the heavenly enjoyment of prayers, and have never tasted of their true bliss. There is a vast majority of people who would hate the call to prayer, because at the time they happen to be engaged in some business of theirs. Such men are to be pitied for their ignorance. They should pray to God with true zeal and sincerity that they may be made to taste of the enjoyment of prayers as they have been granted senses with which they feel the physical pleasures. If they drink of this pure fountain but once, they will not forget its sweetness as long as they live. But so long as they are unaware of its beauties, it is hateful in their eyes. To get up early in the morning from a warm bed when sweet slumber is soothing the senses to rest and to wash oneself in the cold season are heavy inconveniences if unattended with any compensatory benefit.

The question then arises, how to obtain this pleasure in prayers without which they are but an inconvenient burden? The drunkard goes on drinking and takes one cup after another until he gets intoxicated. He does not get tired with the first cup and leave drinking because it has not intoxicated him. He sets before himself the one object of getting the pleasure of intoxication and devotes himself wholly to it. The man who has a longing for the divine joy which is to be found in prayers should have his attention and thoughts



engrossed with it and all his faculties applied to its attainment. The desire to get at it should cause an unrest to his soul and inspire it with true zeal and sincerity for its possession. In saying his prayers he should also aim at holiness which is the necessary consequence of sincere prayers, for the Holy Quran says : " Verily good deeds, *i. e.*, prayers, drive away evils." The deep and divine delight which prayers afford and the true holiness which they effect, should be the objects which a man should set before himself in saying his prayers, and he should further pray to God that his prayers may be like those of the true and faithful servants of God and be blessed with like blessings.

We have said above on the authority of the Holy Quran that good deeds, *i. e.*, prayers, drive away evil deeds. To the same effect the Holy Quran say elsewhere : " Verily prayers do restrain a man from that which is evil and forbidden." These two verses establish that men who say their prayers as enjoined by God cannot do evil deeds. On the other hand, we see a large majority of men saving their prayers and still involved in evils. The reason of this apparent inconsistency is that the observance of prayers has degenerated into a formal ceremony, while the true spirit, warmth and devotion of prayers have departed. It is a lifeless and vapid ceremony which is gone through with insincerity of heart. It is not these forms without spirit that Almighty God has called virtues. The word used for virtues or prayers in the verse is *hasanat* (meaning beauties) and not, *at-salat*, *i. e.*, prayers, although " prayer " is undoubtedly intended here. This use of a peculiar word is meant to draw attention to the beauty and goodness of prayers, and to indicate that only those prayers are a remedy for evils that have in them the soul of truth and sincerity. Prayers proceeding from the heart certainly deliver a man from the bondage of sin, but simply a formal observance of prayers which are devoid of true life is nothing less than an effort to impose upon God. The mere acts of standing, bowing and prostration do not form the prayers enjoined by the Word of God. The gist of prayers is in the humble supplications to God which afford a man true delight and deep joy. The outward postures are really manifestations of the inward humbleness of the soul. In the first place a man stands up before God respectfully like



a humble servant in the awful presence of a mighty monarch. He then bows down to show that his soul bows down in true submission before Him and that it is ready to execute all His orders. After this he prostrates himself on the ground, thus indicating the high respect which he entertains for the Divine Being and his own perfect humility and nothingness before the Divine majesty and awe. The outward movements of the body are, therefore, symbols of the reverence and homage paid by the soul to its great Maker, and they are made part and parcel of prayers in order to give to the body a share in the worship of God and in the reverence shown to him by the soul. They afford, moreover, a proof of the submission of the soul. Now the postures of the body being only shadows and imitations of the different conditions of the soul, it is clear that the person who goes only through the formal ceremony of prayers and is content with a mock-worship, cannot taste of the true and heavenly delight of prayers. He regards them as a burdensome duty and his observance of them is only a mimicry. This is not the object of God in enjoining prayers upon the Muslims. What prayers can effect, cannot be realized until the soul falls down on the Divine threshold with complete submission, and, absorbed in the contemplation of Divine glory and Majesty, becomes fully conscious of its own nothingness. When the soul is thus engrossed, the words of praise or prayer that are uttered by the lips proceed from the heart, and the tongue speaks not a word which is not expressive of the submissiveness and humbleness of the soul. True devotion consists in the ascent of the mind towards God as it realizes His greatness, goodness and providence, and in the humble prostration of the soul as it thinks over its own insignificance and feels how God took care of it in its weakness while it passed through different stages of growth from infancy to old age. In short, the true delight in prayers is not felt until the soul cries out in its weakness for the strength of God and sets His providence against its own dependence. The communication of Divine grace and Divine light is made on a full consciousness of the nothingness of self, for this is a necessary requirement of the providence of God, and the highest degree of happiness and perfect felicity is reached on the attainment of such



communication. When the soul of man assumes nothingness in this manner, it then flows to God like a stream of water fed by a spring, and dissevers its connections from all beside God. The love of God then descends upon him. The junction of two effusions, *i. e.*, the effusion of the grace of God and the spirit of submissiveness, produces a peculiar state called *Salat* which consumes the evils and furnishes the spiritual wayfarer with a light which illuminating the road before him, guides him in his onward journey and serves as a lamp to warn him of the path and as a beacon to save him from ship-wreck on the stormy ocean of life. Such is the *Salat* spoken of in the verse "Verily *Salat* restrains a man from evil and forbidden deeds." The man who observes his prayers in this manner has in his hand, my, in the lantern of his heart, a torch which illuminates his path and saves him from stumbling at the rocks. This condition of the mind is produced on complete submission, full obedience and total surrender to the Will of God. Such a man is inaccessible to sin and impregnable against the attacks of evil. The supreme heavenly delight which he feels cannot be described in words.

It should also be borne in mind that humble supplication to God alone is the way to true prayers. To address one's petitions to others than God is faithlessness to Him, and such an act will be condemned by all who entertain any jealousy for Divine honor, for prayer is the due of God only. No one deserves to be called a true Muslim or truly faithful unless he is sincere in his devotion to God and addresses all prayers and makes all entreaties to Him. The true significance of Islam requires its professor to surrender all his faculties and powers to God without any reservation. The safest engine to move the system of human faculties is the power of God, and the man who does not submit himself to be drawn by that engine is a denier of Godhead. He is not single-hearted and sincere in his faith and the words are false which he utters in the beginning of his prayers: "Verily I turn myself entirely to Him who created heavens and earth, single-hearted." If, as he turns his face, his heart is also turned to God, he is no doubt a true Muslim and sincere in his Islam (*Honeef*). But the man who prays to others than God and leans to any other side from the way of God, is not a true



Muslim. He is deprived of the blessings which are granted to the righteous, and the lip-homage which he offers to God will soon degenerate into a total desertion of the divine cause. Inclining to God only partially is also the cause of laxity in and indifference to prayers, for to whatever direction a man turns himself, his soul and heart turn in the same direction, and his heart becomes hardened with regard to the side from which he has diverted his faculties. Thus is the heart hardened gradually against God by leaning at first a little to the other side. To pray to others than God is, therefore, a fatal spiritual disease. The Lord God is a jealous God and he does not like that others should be prayed to or worshipped along with Him and cuts off from himself the man who gives a share to others in his devotions. But at the same time constancy and regularity in the observance of prayers is the way to perfect righteousness, for prayers incline the heart to God and thus by and by lead to a total severance of all other connections. We confess the Unity of God in words but practically we show it in our prayers. Both our confession and practice are fruitless without a sincere heart and an obedient soul which is conscious of its nothingness and submissiveness to God. It is prayer with these requisites that is accepted by God as stated in the verse "Call on me and I will listen to you."

It might be objected that if prayer can effect an object, one need not resort to the means for its attainment. This is a misunderstanding of the scope of prayer. Muslim Law does not forbid men to look for the means. In fact the search for means is a prayer, while prayer is the fountain-head of means, for the attainment of an end. But I should say that it behoves us to seek means by means of prayer itself, for means are not forbidden to us. The life of every prophet sent by God affords an illustration of this. Almighty God had little need of the help of men but there came a time upon every prophet when he had to cry out for help and say, "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" But this is not the cry of a helpless and destitute man; it is the cry of a teacher whose object is to teach his people that while they pray to and trust in God, they should not neglect the means for the attainment of an end, for looking for



the means is also a kind of prayer to God. Had they not this object in view, they should not have cried for help, for they had a perfect faith in God and an absolute certainty of the fulfilment of His promises. They knew that Almighty God had assured them of His help in this very life and said to them "Of a certainty will We assist Our apostles and the faithful men in this life." Now the promised help of God comes through men, for it is He who inspires them to help His apostle. The real Helper is only God, who is the most excellent Master, Advocate and Helper. This world and its assistance have no worth in the eyes of the true prophets of God, and their call for assistance is meant only to indicate a plainer way of praying to God. They regard it as a sin to entertain the idea that men can do something for them, for they look upon God as the sole administrator of their affairs and put their whole trust in Him. The charge of their affairs is in the hands of Almighty God, and they are commanded by him to call others to their assistance. They seek not the assistance of others, but the men through whom Divine assistance will come to them, which they know must surely come. In fact they anticipate the assistance of God, and looking forward to it before its actual arrival they make haste to receive it. A superficial observer would think that they were seeking the assistance of men but the reality is that they are calling men to receive Divine blessings and mercy by becoming the agencies of heavenly assistance. This is the secret of the call for help made by the prophets of God. They do not seek assistance at earthly doors or trust in others than God, for this according to them borders upon unbelief. Their object in calling men to their assistance is to make them the recipients of the gifts of God and to inspire them with Divine majesty and awe. For sacred and righteous men like the prophets it is impossible to cry for help to insignificant mortals, for the Unity of God pervades their hearts, and the essence of Divine Unity is that Almighty God should be recognised as the sole Giver of all gifts to whom alone in time of need men must cry, and as the only Healer of all diseases and the only Remover of all difficulties. This is the true interpretation of *la-ilaha illallah*. The word *Allah* means the true object of desire, love and worship, and unless a man makes God as the



true and sole object of his desire, love and worship, he is devoid of the true beauty and grandeur of Islam.

In short, it is impossible for a man to find true delight and heavenly enjoyment in prayers if he looks to others than God or cries to them in time of need. The enjoyment of bliss can be obtained only when impure thoughts, unholy ideas and evil plans are all burned like chaff, vanity and self-esteem being annihilated. Submissiveness and lowliness take their place, and a man becomes the true servant, the true lover and the true worshipper of God. Prayers in fact are the best and most excellent means to teach true and perfect humility. Let every one who wishes to establish a true connection and a holy association with God bear in mind that he can attain to this state of heavenly union only by regularity in and constancy at his prayers. But we do not mean that he should make only his body assume certain stated postures and his tongue utter some words, but that his soul with all its inclinations and emotions should walk in true submission to God and become wholly devoted to prayers. This is also the secret of the sinlessness of the prophet. They are so lost in the love of God that they have no inclination or passion of their own and are wholly devoted to God. I wonder when I see people who have set up others with God, such as the Hindus who worship all sorts of idols including idols of male and female reproductive organs, and the Christians who worship the dead body of a mortal. They have devised different means which they think would bring salvation to them. The Hindus, for instance, believe that a bath in the Ganges or a pilgrimage to some famous *Tirath* takes away their sins, while the Christians are under the wrong impression that a bath in the blood of Jesus, *i. e.*, a belief in his supposed death upon the cross, is sufficient to cleanse them of all sorts of sins and to save them from falling into evils. But it can be easily seen that both these people are the dupes of fatal errors. So long as the causes of sin are not removed, a mere external purification or the entertaining of a peculiar belief, can give no happiness or satisfaction to the heart. It is the internal purification, a pure transformation of the soul, which strikes at the root of sin and destroys the sinful nature, and thus brings man to true salvation. But there is a lesson in it for one who reflects. As it is



necessary to wash away the external impurities to keep the body in a sound and healthy condition, in a like manner spiritual uncleanness which is the result of the impurities of the heart and of unmortified desires and lusts cannot be removed except by the pure and clear water of true repentance. The spiritual system corresponds to the physical system and as there are laws prevailing in the one, so there are also in the other.

We would also point out here the cause which gives rise to sin. When the love of others than God takes possession of the human heart, a kind of rust gathers upon it and its transparency is gradually darkened. Instead of being the habitation of God it becomes the habitation of others and is removed farther off from God. This is the cause of sin and this is the root from which *shirk* (setting up others with God springs. But when the love of God alone predominates in the heart and has controlling power over it to the exclusion of all other things, it consumes all foreign elements and chooses it as its own seat. This gives rise to uprightness and integrity and restores to the heart its original purity. It may cause a little pain to restore a broken bone to its place, but if this step is not taken at the proper time, it will cause a far greater pain and ultimately the bone itself shall have to be removed. Similarly it may appear a little difficult at the outset to walk in uprightness and mortify the carnal desires, but if these difficulties are once faced, eternal happiness is the result, whereas to eschew them is sure to lead to eternal and immense pain. We have said above that sin arises from the love of others than God. Progress in the love of God and in faith to Him is, therefore, the only true remedy for it, for when the love of God resign in the heart, the internal lusts are carnal desires are all mortified and sin is consumed.

The feeling of death also helps a man to refrain from sins. If a man keeps in mind the transitoriness of this life and thinks of his end, he would not venture to commit sins or transgress the Divine commandments, and having obtained a new faith on God, he would feel repentance and contrition for his former sins and transgressions. How transitory is this life which passes away in the twinkling of an eye. Why is man regardless of his end then? Why does he waste away his days



in blind obedience to his carnal passions and desires? Consider how the Holy Prophet kept his death in constant remembrance that his followers might learn a lesson from him. If he kept his end before him, notwithstanding his perfect purity of mind and holiness of heart on account of which he was made the perfect Guide for the whole world and for all times, how much more should we? In fact whatever the Holy Prophet did was to set an example for us to follow. The life of the Prophet is a practical illustration of the injunctions of the Holy Quran. He was made a Prophet for the whole world, for in his person was manifested every excellence that man can possess. It is to this that the verse refers: "Verily thou dost possess the highest moral excellence." He was, therefore, the last of prophets, for in him were terminated the excellences of perfect prophethood. The object with which prophets were sent reached its perfection in the person of the Holy Prophet and this is the true interpretation of the finality of prophethood in him.

It should be borne in mind that *istiqanat* or uprightness is the highest stage in the spiritual development of a man the goal to which he aspires. The Sufis call it *fana* or annihilation of self. The *Sirat-i-Mustaqim*, i. e., the path of uprightness, has also been understood to signify the annihilation of self, i. e., a complete subjection of the soul and its passions and carnal desires. Most of those who do not submit their own inclinations and passions to the will of God, leave the world with great grief on account of their failures, and find at last that what they thought to be their gain turned out to be a great loss. Islam teaches us that failure is the result of insincerity. When a man disregards God, the wrath of God descends upon him and makes his undertakings a failure. But those who are blessed of God, keep always in sight the noble principle that this world, is not a lasting world, and that we must soon pass away from it as the former generations have passed away. To such men death always seems to be at the doors and old age is particularly a sign of its near approach.

In short, if it is borne in mind that this world and all its pleasures must end soon, the wise man will not resort to unlawful ways of enjoying these pleasures. What the hand of death must take away forcibly from



him, he should be ready to forsake that hour, if it is against the will of God. The world and its comforts are really means to a greater end, *i. e.*, devotion to the worship of God. Do not think that while you are given to the pleasure of this world, God will be pleased with you. The blind man does not forsake the pleasures of this world nor give any preference over them to the faithful in the worship of God though the Word of God, may say it. The Word of God which is the Holy Quran, promises great blessing and eternal happiness to the faithful, but no heed is paid to its promises. The fool is ready to suffer all hardships and face every difficulty for the satisfaction of his bodily desires but the slightest difficulty on the path of God throws him into confusion and fills his mind with doubts. Ah ! that he could see the insignificance of the transitory and impure pleasures of this world when compared with the everlasting bliss of the heavenly enjoyment of the next world. What he thinks to be a thorny field is a bed of roses, and that which seems to him pleasure is really pain.

To overcome all these difficulties there is only one way which has been tried thousands of times by the righteous of God. It is the *Slât* or prayers. The *Slât* is a prayer, a supplication to God which saves a man from falling into evil and unrighteous deeds and entitles him to walk in virtue and righteousness and be a recipient of the Divine gifts and blessings. It has been said that Allah is the *ism-i-a'zam* (the great name) of God which means that it comprehends all the attributes of God and denotes the perfection of the Divine Being. Consider prayers now. They are preceded by a call which begins with the words "Allah is Great," and ends with "Nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah." So the Muslim prayers both begin and end with the name of Allah and this is an eminent distinction which no other form of devotion can claim. In the Muslim prayers it is Allah who is sought for in the beginning, and Allah who is sought for in the end. No other religion or form of worship in the world has such a noble object in view. Now Allah has already pointed out is the great name of the Divine Being, *i. e.*, it comprehends all His attributes and as signifies the significance of His perfection, and it is with this name that both the call to prayers and the prayers themselves begin.



beginning and end. *Istiqamat* or uprightness in man corresponds to the great name of Allah. In other words uprightness is the means by which a man can attain to perfection. This is what is indicated in the words "Guide us in the path of uprightness." On another occasion the Holy Quran says : Those who bring themselves under the providence of Allah, *i. e.*, occupy a place opposite the great name of God then walk in uprightness, *i. e.*, manifest qualities which are a requirement of the great name of man), the angels descend on them and they have no fear or sorrow." *Istiqamat* is the one thing to be desired. There is a position of *istiqamat* for everything and this it is said to acquire when it stands erect in its place. In other words, the true position of everything is a position of *istiqamat* for it. Therefore the man who does not walk in uprightness leaves his true position and cannot attain to human excellence.

The bliss of prayers is realized when the great name of man falls opposite the great name of God, *i. e.*, when a man shows uprightness and calls upon none but God, not even upon the idol of his own desires. In this state the truth of "Call upon Me, I will hearken to you." is fully realized. Every man should therefore, try as he can to walk in uprightness and to attain it with austerity, for his prayers will then be listened to. The acceptance of prayer is now generally denied in the world but it is to be deplored that people complain of the non-acceptance of prayer though they never make their conditions suitable to its acceptance. Until *istiqamat* is acquired, the pleasure of the acceptance of prayer can never be realized. When a man walks in uprightness, he is blessed in this very world with a calm repose and tranquillity of mind. Apparent failures and great difficulties do not then disturb the peace of his mind. But to those who are ignorant of the nature and reality of prayer, the slightest failure burns their hearts like a flame of fire and taking away their peace of mind leaves them in a hell. It is to this state of burning overtures that the following verse refers : "The flame of fire burned by God that ascends over the hearts."

There is another point worth mentioning. The Holy Prophet had to depart and thus a great exemplar, the most excellent agency that showed the path to God, had to be taken away from the companions. So they were



told : " Say if you love God, then walk in my footsteps and God will love you." Now no one can be the beloved of God except the upright man. To renew and increase the love of the followers for their Holy Master, they were enjoined to invoke Divine blessings on the Holy Prophet, and this was made a part of their prayers, so that their love for the upright one should ever be on the increase and thus lead them to uprightness. It is admitted by all Muslims that spiritually the Holy Prophet lives for ever. The *Sufis* say that the names of the reformers are manifestation of the name of the Holy Prophet in some one or other of its aspects. The excellences of prophethood terminated in the perfect Guide, but their manifestations will always continue to appear in the world through the successors of the Holy Prophet till the day of judgment. The mercy of God comes down upon earth : therefore pray to Him and ask for uprightness, and invoke the blessings of God on the Holy Prophet for this is the only way to uprightness. Remember the beauties and goodness of the Holy Prophet and pray to God that He may raise his dignity still higher and crown his mission with still greater success. Then will you taste the sweet fruit of the acceptance of prayer, for there are only three ways to it ; firstly, that indicated in the verse " Say if you love God, then follow me and God will love you ;" secondly, that spoken of in the verse " O ye faithful ! pray for peace and the blessings of God on the Holy Prophet ;" and thirdly, the grace of God.

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### THE NATURE OF PRAYER AND ITS BLESSINGS.

It is commonly thought, and often urged as an argument against the efficacy of prayer, that a prayer to God and the seeking of means are two opposite lines, and that since the latter course is sufficient for the attainment of an end, a man need not resort to the former. This objection against prayer is not only directed from the atheistical camp, but wonderful as it may appear, even within the circle of Islam there are men, by no means, few in numbers, who entertain this mistaken view. When we cast a glance at the Divine laws manifested in external nature, it becomes quite clear that there is a necessary and indissoluble connection between



means and prayer. Any one who sets before himself the attainment of an object, at first looks for the means and endeavours to his utmost to find out the agencies by which he can possibly attain that end. In this search for means he has to apply all his faculties to the object before him and give his whole attention to the finding of those means. When we are sick, for instance, we seek for the proper remedy, or if we have not the skill which can enable us to find the true remedy, we call in a physician who reflects on the causes and nature of our disease, and whose genius is sometimes guided to a remedy which removes our illness to some extent. The method thus suggested is the result of a deep reflection and of the consideration given to the question, which, in other words may be called a prayer. For when we strive hard in search of what is hidden from us and unknown to us, we really seek for guidance from a Higher power from whom nothing is hidden, in a language which is expressed by our very condition. In fact it cannot be doubted that when, in search of a thing, the soul stretches out its hands in true zeal and ardour to the Giver of all gifts, and finding itself weak and unable to attain the end by itself seeks for light from some other source, it is plunged in a prayerful meditation, and its condition then is truly of one who prays to God. It is this prayer which is the key to all treasures of knowledge and which brought about the discovery of so many sciences. Our meditations and reflections and our search for that which is hidden from us, are all a sort of prayer. The difference is only this that the truly wise, the holy men of God, pray with due respect to Him whom they recognise to be the Source of all blessings and their supplications are based upon a clear knowledge, while the prayer of those upon whose eyes a veil is cast, is like wandering in darkness and it takes the form of meditation and reflection. Both have the same object in view, *viz.*, the opening of hidden ways and deep paths and the discovery of means which would make them successful in the attainment of an end. The person who has not a true knowledge of God and a certain faith in His existence, is ignorant of the Giver from whom he must seek, but still when in distress he seeks for assistance from some other source which he does not know. He walks in darkness and does not know that the way



opened to him upon reflection and consideration is also opened by God. But Almighty God sees the heart and looking upon its meditations as prayer, guides the man, who is thus engaged, in the attainment of his object. In short, it is God who breathes into the hearts of men new points of wisdom and knowledge, for Almighty God knows that it is He from whom the assistance is sought though the seeker may be unaware of it. If, as stated above, the search is made and assistance sought with a certain knowledge of the true Guide and a certain belief in His existence, it is a devout prayer as required by the holy Word of God. But if the search for true light degenerates only into a search of means by deep consideration and reflection, and the source from which that light comes is not recognised, it is a prayer over which the veil of ignorance is drawn.

It is, therefore, clear that prayer has precedence of means and that it is an essential step for every person who sets any object before himself. Every one who seeks to gain an end must pass over this bridge. To set prayer in opposition to means is the height of absurdity. When we pray to God we only supplicate the Almighty Being, who has superior knowledge of the subtlest and most hidden means, to infuse into our minds some suitable and proper plan or by His creative power to bring into existence some plan which can bring about the object that is before us. Means, therefore, are not opposed to prayer but a result of them. Moreover as this close connection between means and prayer is established by the laws of nature, human nature also bears witness to it. It is not only to means and remedies that the nature of man turns in distress and disease, but it also seeks a relief in alms and prayer. A glance at the different nations of the world establishes the universality of this rule. Resorting to prayer is, therefore, as well a requirement of human nature as the seeking of means, and both these methods for the attainment of an end are, like twin brothers, the benefactors of human nature. Prayer opens the way to means, and the search of means calls for prayer. The true success and prosperity of a man lie in this that before adverting to means he should resort to prayer and seek assistance from the true Giver of all gifts, so that being fed from that source of light, he may find the best and most suitable plans.



The necessity of prayer is evident from another point of view. We cannot say with certainty that a particular measure would lead to a particular end or that a particular remedy would cure a particular disease. Under these circumstances no greater misfortune can befall a man than that trusting in probabilities, he should omit to seek the grace and mercy of God by means of prayer. For what is it that we seek in prayer? The whole object of our prayer to God is that He may either protect us from a disease for instance and thus save us the trouble of resorting to medicines or going to physicians, or if we are suffering from a disease that He, the Knower of all secrets, should enable us to diagnose the disease rightly and discover the proper remedy. Can it be doubted that there is a Higher Being who holds all power in His hands and to Whose will and order our lives are wholly subject. When He wills a certain thing, the whole system of earth and heavens obeys His order and turns in the direction in which He wishes to turn it. If it is His will that the health of a country should be good at a particular moment, He brings about means which are necessary for that end. On the other hand, when it is His will that any country should be infected with a pestilence, He brings into existence the causes which would bring about the desired object. The dominion of earth and heavens is in His hands and every particle of the universe hears His voice and obeys it. His power has not ended with the creation of the world. Even now He creates and exercises His dominion as He did before. Our own bodies bear witness to His new creation. The old particles of the body are momentarily dying away while new ones take their place. Almighty God is continually creating and continually annihilating. One world perishes every moment while another is brought into existence. Almighty God is also the supporter of what He has created and everything has an existence on account of His support. It is a great error to suppose that He did not create matter and soul, or that having created them once, He has now nothing more to do with them. He is the soul of every soul, and everything owes its existence to Him only. As we have not come into existence without His act, so we cannot live without His support. If He is then the God in whose hands is our life and death, and in obedience to whom the particles of our body



unite and disunite, what a grievous error to think that we can do aught or live prosperously by our own machinations and independently of Him! Such is not the case. Our plans also come from Him. Our intellect is without a light unless He enlightens it. The elements are not under our control, and we have no power over the laws of nature. There are numerous causes which have their effect on our health and they are not controlled by us but by God who is their author. It is in reference to this that Almighty God says in the Holy Quran : "And the change of winds and clouds (is the work of God), and herein are signs of the existence of God and of His power for the wise." The change here spoken of is a two-fold change, *i. e.*, an apparent change of winds and clouds or their turning from one direction to another direction and from one place to another place, and a change in their qualities or making the air and water morbidiferous or salubrious in their effects, producing plagues and pestilences in the one case and promoting health in the other. Man has no control in bringing about these changes. Moreover there are numerous other causes, so subtle, obscure and hidden that the human eye cannot discover them, which exert a beneficial or injurious effect upon our health, and no one can by his own exertions make them subservient to his own cause. There is no doubt then that man stands in urgent need of turning for assistance to Him who has supreme control over all primary as well as the remotest causes.

The Word of God has kept a distinction between the two men, one of whom looking upon Almighty God as the fountain-head of all blessings, seeks His assistance and support by prayers, expressed by his own strength and plans considers prayer as mere trash and a thing to be laughed at and walks in vanity as if he were independent of God. The difference between the two is the difference between the good and the bad man. The person who in distress or difficulty resorts to prayer and seeks from God the solution or removal of his difficulties, is blessed with tranquility of mind and true happiness, provided that his prayer has all the requisite of a true prayer in it. Even if he does not attain the object for which he prays, he is granted peace and security of mind from God and does not meet disappointment



or dissatisfaction. Besides success, his faith is thus strengthened and his belief in God attains a higher degree of certainty. But the person who does not turn to God with prayers, lives and dies a blind man. It may be thought by a superficial observer that sometimes the man who prays witnesses failure while another man who neither prays nor believes in God is successful in his undertakings, and seems to have triumphed for a while over the supPLICATOR. This is not actually the case. As pointed out above, the true object of prayer is the attainment of true felicity and of the peace and security of mind. It is by no means true that our happiness consists only in the attainment of the object prayed for. The Omniscient God only knows what constitutes our real happiness and therefore our devout prayers accepted by Him by the bestowal on us of true happiness which is the real object of our prayers. It is impossible that the man who prays with devoutness and sincerity of soul, should meet with disappointment and sorrow. The supreme felicity which neither wealth nor dominion, nor even health, can bring to us, and which is solely in the hands of God, who grants it to whom He will in the way He chooses, that perfect bliss is granted after devout and sincere prayers. When God wills it, a righteous servant of His in the greatest distress finds himself after prayer in a state of blissfulness which the greatest monarch has never experienced in the height of his power. He who finds this state of bliss attains the real object and his griefs and anxieties end in joy.

But true satisfaction and real happiness are obtained only by devout and sincere prayers, and hence the man who follows his own plans cannot taste of true delight even though he may attain the object which he wished for. His very success is a failure for beneath it is all suffering. He does not look to the end, but judges matters from an apparent and temporary success or failure. The truth is that a good end is reserved only for such as fear God and pray to Him. Theirs is the true success for they find supreme delight and perfect felicity.

It is unjust to deny the grace which flows exclusively from prayer, and to scorn the teachings of the holy prophets of God whose lives were illustrations of the marvellous efficacy of prayer. Is it not true that it was by the prayers of those holy ones that their



arrogant and contumacious enemies who opposed and persecuted them, were brought to disgrace or destruction. Consider the efficacy of Noah's prayer which washed away his enemies by a deluge ; reflect upon the power of Moses' prayer which swept off Pharaoh with all his hosts ; look at the efficaciousness of the curse which Jesus pronounced against the Jews and which became the means of their destruction at the hands of the Romans and think about the prayers of our own Lord and Master against his cruel persecutors and torturers how they brought the wicked mischief-makers to a sad end. Is it not a satisfactory proof that according to a spiritual law which can be traced to the earliest times of the prophets the kindness of the Divine Being especially comes into motion on devout and humble prayers, and the favours of security and satisfaction of true bliss are only then granted in full abundance ? If we pray for the right object, it is granted to us, and if on account of our ignorance we are guilty of an error like the silly child who asks his mother to let him handle a burning coal or a serpent, Almighty God who has supreme knowledge of the means of our welfare, bestows upon us some other gift which is conducive to our good and happiness. And whether our prayers are accepted by granting us the very object prayed for or otherwise, our faith is greatly strengthened, for from answers to our prayers we know beforehand of their acceptance and consequently we, as it were, see God.

It should be born in mind that we cannot bring about the acceptance of our prayers by our own efforts. When it is the will of God that a certain object should be performed, the Divine law is that some one of His righteous servants is moved to pray for it, his condition expressing utter helplessness and disquietude for the attainment of that object and his whole attention and care being occupied with its performance. The devout and humble prayers of such a one who loses himself entirely in the contemplation of Divine Majesty and Glory draw the grace of God from heaven, and Almighty God brings into existence such means and agencies as are necessary for bringing about the attainment of that object. Though the petitioner in such a case is evidently a man, yet he is so far annihilated in God and at the time of prayer walks in such utter annihilation of his self,



at his hand at the time is not his own hand but the hand of God. Such is the prayer by which God is recognised and the existence of that Glorious Being discovered, Who is hidden behind thousands of screens. For those who pray in this manner, heaven is brought nearer to earth and the prayer being accepted, unknown ways of the solution of their difficulties are revealed. This is often revealed to the supplicants before the occurrence of the events, or at least the certainty of the acceptance of their prayers is driven like a nail of iron into the core of their hearts. The truth is that if the efficacy of prayer had not been a reality, no human being could ever have realized the certainty of the truth of divine existence. It is prayer that leads us to the fountain of inspiration and prayer which makes us talk with God. When a person prays with true sincerity, love, faithfulness and submission to God until his own self is completely annihilated then the living God who is hidden from the eyes of the world, manifests Himself to him. Prayer is a necessity of our life not only on account of its usefulness in the attainment of our worldly objects, but also because without the manifestation of these heavenly signs which appear after true and sincere prayers, the face of the God of glory is not revealed to man in its full effulgence. An ignorant man thinks that prayer is a meaningless thing, but he is not aware that it is by prayer only that Almighty God shines in His glory upon the seekers and reveals to them His wonderful power and might. Let every one who thirsts for certainty, bear in mind that in this life prayer is the only means for a seeker after spiritual light which can bring about a certainty in the existence of God and dispel the darkness of all doubts and misgivings. The man who attains his objects without prayer does not know from whom he has got them. The person who lays stress on the efficacy of means, and is indifferent to prayer, hardly ever entertains the idea that the objects he has attained have been of a certainty granted by Almighty God. On the other hand, the person who on his prayer is given the glad tidings of success in undertaking, advances in Divine love and knowledge on the fulfilment of that object and witnesses a manifest heavenly sign upon the acceptance of his prayer. Being thus filled with certainty from time to time, he is purged of every



sin and every sinful tendency and becomes so to say a spirit on account of his perfect freedom from every earthly desire. But the man who through prayer never witnesses the signs of the mercy of Almighty God is devoid of true certainty notwithstanding his successes in the attainment of his objects and the possession of means of comfort and treasures of wealth. He prospers instead of exercising any healthy and beneficial influence over him gradually hardens his heart and only adds to his vanity and self-glory. His faith in God, if he has such faith, is a lifeless and vapid thing which cannot restrain him from yielding to the passions of flesh or bring about a pure transformation in his life.

It can scarcely be advanced as a serious objection to the efficacy of prayer that the pre-ordained decrees of God are unchangeable. For, if their unchangeableness prevents the efficacy of prayer, it must also prevent the efficacy of medicines and in fact of all sort of plans for the attainment of various objects. But as the properties of medicines are established by experience and their efficacy in healing diseases is frequently witnessed, so the acceptance of prayer and its powerful efficacy are facts based on the experience of wise and holy men. Whether this deep secret may or may not be plainly realized by the generality of men, it is a most certain fact whose truth has been borne witness to by the experience of millions of the righteous servants of God in all ages, and by the writer's own proved experience in this age. We have witnessed thousands of times with our own eyes this hidden truth that our prayers have a magnetic power which draws the grace and mercy of God. Prayer is also the true essence and spirit of our *Namaz*, i.e., daily prayer and in the *Fatiha* when we pray to God in the words lead us to the right path we only wish to draw by means of this prayer the heavenly light which descends from God and fills the heart with love and certainty.

Some men think that prayer may be resorted to, but prayer means only the worship of God and it is a deed of merit which will be rewarded hereafter. This is a serious error. Every devotion which is devoid of true spirituality and every reward which is vainly looked for at some future moment, is a worthless thing or an idle hope. Sincere worship of God and true reward make



their light and blessings felt in this very world. It is the sign of the acceptance of our devotions that when praying to God we witness with our spiritual eye that a panacean light descends from God, nullifying the effect of the poisonous matters in our heart, and falling upon us like a flame of fire burns away the carnal desire and fills the heart with certainty and with a holy feeling of love and joy, and opens the breast for receiving truths and heavenly wisdom. If the mind does not experience these things, our worship and devotions are nothing more than lifeless ceremonies. Every prayer, though it be for the removal of our worldly difficulties, casts a benignant influence on our minds. It first strengthens our faith and increases our divine knowledge, and after granting a security, openness, and blissfulness to the mind, it then dispels the gloom of our distresses and banishes our cares and sorrows in one way or another. The mere utterance of a few words does not, therefore, constitute a prayer. A true prayer is that which has actually a magnetic power, and after which a light descends from heaven which dissipates the clouds of our anxieties, and grants us a peace and security of mind. It is true that Divine assistance is vouchsafed to us in one of two ways after a true prayer, *viz.* either the difficulty which would crush us under its weight is altogether removed, or we are granted a supernatural power to bear it and then we find a joy and a bliss in it, and being freed from all uneasiness our breast is opened for its reception. In both cases Divine assistance does certainly come to us after a devout and sincere prayer.

To understand the acceptance of prayer, we must first know the nature of a true prayer. Between God and His righteous servant there is a mutual attraction. The mercy of God at first draws His servant to Him. Almighty God then comes nearer to His servant by the attraction of his faithfulness and sincerity. At the time of prayer this connection having reached a particular stage displays its wonderful characteristics. When the servant being involved in serious difficulties turns to God with perfect faith, absolute certainty, full hope, consummate love, complete faithfulness and undaunted resolution, and having rent asunder all veils of remissness, traverses the vast fields of annihilation, Divine glory is revealed to him in full lustre. His soul then



lays itself down on the Divine threshold in complete submission and its magnetic power attracts the grace and favors of God. The Divine will then turns to perform the object prayed for and makes the prayer influence the causes which ultimately bring about the attainment of the desired end. It is, therefore, a fact established and proved by the experience of the righteous who are fed from the source of inspiration, that the prayers of a perfect man have a creating power in them; in other words, they influence with Divine permission the forces acting in the material and spiritual worlds and also act upon human thought and will, and thus make them all act concurrently to accomplish the object. Instances of this abound in all holy books and the miraculous owes its existence to a great extent to the acceptance of prayer. What was it that happened in the sandy deserts of Arabia? The dead were raised to life in thousands, the blind were made to see, the dumb were made to utter words of heavenly wisdom, and the depraved of long generations were clothed in Divine morals. The whole peninsula underwent in a few days a transformation which no eye had seen and no ear heard: Ah! these were the midnight prayers and deep sighs of a perfect one which showed these wonderful works whose execution by a helpless unlearned orphan seemed an impossibility. Pour down Thy favours, blessings and place upon him, O God, in as great an abundance as was his grief and anxiety for the welfare of Thy people, and cause the lights of Thine mercy to descend upon him to all eternity.

I have myself experienced upon thousands of occasions that no agency in the material world comes up to prayer in its powerful efficacy. If it be objected that there are cases in which prayer fails to bring about the desired end, I say that the same law prevails in the material world. Take medicine for instance. Has it shut the door to death? Is it an infallible cure for diseases? Or does it not fail to produce its effect in certain cases? And does any sane person in spite of this deny the efficacy of medicines? It is true that the decree of heaven prevails everywhere and for ever, but it does not void the sciences which are based on human experience or rob the means of their instrumentality. On a deeper reflection it appears that physical as well as spi-



ritual means are subject to the decree of heaven. For instance, if health is ordained by heaven for a sick man, efficacious remedies are also obtained, and every condition is of service in promoting his health. So also with prayer. The conditions for its acceptance and the requisite means are not available unless it is the will of God that it should be accepted. But as such a contingency is no bar to us in resorting to medicines in case of sickness, and their actual benefit, though sometimes they do fail, cannot be disputed, so there is no valid objection to the use and benefits of prayer.

Moreover, when it is admitted that the happiness, felicities and blessing of the next world, which are expressed in the one word "Salvation," are obtained by means of prayers, the efficacy of prayers is also admitted; for, if our prayer cannot help us in getting freed from adversities and in the attainment of our objects in this life, there is no reason they should effect that purpose in the life to come. If prayer has no efficacy in his world, it is absurd to suppose that it will show its efficacy in the next. On the other hand, if we believe in its efficacy in the next, we cannot but admit its efficacy here, so that its manifestation in this very life may strengthen our faith and hope in the next, and we may pray with greater zeal for the blessings of the next life.

It must also be borne in mind that there are four reasons for which Almighty God has rendered prayer obligatory upon the Muslims. Firstly, that by turning to God at all times and in all states, we may acquire firmness in our faith in the Divine unity, for our entreaties to God are equivalent to our confession that He is the sole Giver of all gifts. Secondly, that on the acceptance of our prayer and the object prayed for, our faith in God may be strengthened. Thirdly, that if Divine assistance comes in any other way, our knowledge and wisdom may be increased. Fourthly, that if the acceptance of our prayer is promised to us by means of inspiration or visions and it comes to pass exactly in the same manner, one may advance in Divine knowledge, and attain from knowledge to certainty, from certainty to love and from love to a total freedom from sin, and entire dis severance of all connections besides our connection with God, and thus obtain the fruit of true sal.



vation. But if our objects are attained independently of prayer and a veil hides the face of God from us, the fulfilment of our desires becomes ultimately a source of grief and anxiety for us, and every success which was deemed at first a pleasure becomes a sorrow. But the sight and knowledge which are granted through prayer and the blessings which are bestowed upon us from the heavenly treasure, never diminish or decline. On the other hand, advancing day by day in Divine love and knowledge, a man will ascend by this holy ladder of prayers to the pinnacles of bliss.

There are four prime attributes of the Divine Being and each of these calls for a particular state in man. The four attributes are *Rabubiyyat* (sustenance) *Rahmaniyyat* (mercy,) *Rahimiyyat* (compassion), and *Malikiyyat* (Lordship of the day of Judgment). *Rabubiyyat* requires for the exercise of its favors absolute nothingness or a state resembling it, and all beings, organic as well as inorganic, owe their existence to this attribute. *Rahmaniyyat* requires a state of nothingness, but it is exercised only in relation to living beings. *Rahimiyyat* has its sphere limited only to human being, and requires a confession of utter insignificance and nothingness from man. *Malikiyyat* requires a humbling of one's self and soliciting like a true supplicants prostrate themselves on the Divine threshold and consciousness of their poverty sincerely believe in the Lordship of God and implore Divine grace. These four attributes are always working in the world. Out of these the Divine attribute of *rahimiyyat* moves a man to prayer, while *malikiyyat*, melting the soul with the fear of God, inspires into it the true spirit of humility, lowliness and submission, for it shows that salvation and Divine protection cannot be claimed as of right, but are granted only by Divine grace.

In brief, it appears from the Holy Quran, and reason supports the fact, that four above-named attributes are the chief attributes of the Divine. *rahimiyyat* requires a man to pray, so that Divine assistance and favours may come to him. Therefore to deny the efficacy of prayer, or its magnetism in drawing the favours of God, is, in fact, a denial of *rahimiyyat*, the third attribute of God, which is ordinary atheism. *Rahimiyyat* is the attribute through which a man's faith in the other attributes of the Divine Being, is strengthened and brought perfec-



tion. For, when in obedience to the requirement of this attribute we receive the favours of God on our humble prayers and supplications our difficulties are removed, our faith regarding the existence, power, mercy and other attributes of the Divine Being becomes a certainty, and we realize the truth of our obligation to thank and praise Him for His numerous blessing.

It is clear that the first and important object of our lives is a true knowledge of God, and if there is defect or obscurity in it, our faith is devoid of light and certainty. Unless we recognise God by seeing Him through the manifestations of His attribute of *rahmyyat* i. e., the bestowal of His favours by acceptance of our prayers), we cannot drink of the pure and sweet fountain of Divine knowledge. Unless we are self-deceived, we must see our inability to reach that source by any other way. The existence of God is not a certainty to us unless the Divine attributes of mercy, grace and power being fully realized by us through experience exert such a powerful influence on our mind as to free it from all carnal desires and evil insinuations, which arising from a weakness of faith and want of certainty quite overpower us. Is it not true that in this ephemeral life a man is involved in terrible darkness, because the rays of the light of Divine knowledge do not penetrate to his heart? The greater the love he entertains for this world and its attractions of wealth and power, the less the desire which he has for true happiness and eternal welfare. Now, the cause of this indifference and apathy to the joys of heaven and bliss of the next world is nothing but the absence of a true faith concerning the power, and promises of God. It is, therefore, necessary for the seeker after truth that he should try to obtain, in right earnest, such true faith. The mere fact that he is a Musalman, and hates *shirk* and says his prayers, is not sufficient to release him from the bondage of sin, or make him attain salvation. Only he will find true salvation and supreme delight and perfect bliss after death who has found in this very life the true and living light which turns a man with all his faculties, inclinations and desires, to God, and mortifying all earthly desires works a pure transformation in his soul. And what is this true and living light? It is nothing but a certainty of Divine existence, and a perfect Divine knowledge.



It is the heavenly power which with its powerful hand draws a man out of the dangerous and dark pit of slavery to passion, and seats him in open space where there is light and safety. Before this light is obtained a man's virtuous deeds are only formalities in obedience to custom, and the slightest trial is apt to stumble him. Without certainty a man's relation with God cannot be clear. But the man to whom certainty is given flows towards God like water, flies to Him faster than the wind, burns like fire everything foreign to God, and bears every suffering with patience and steadfastness like earth. It is a sweet syrup which, as soon as it is taken, sweetens the whole body. It is a delicious milk which makes a man indifferent to the dainties of the world. But it is found only by means of true and devout prayers in which a man completely annihilates himself.

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### THE ESSENCE OF ISLAM.

The word *Islam* signifies literally to pay in advance the price of a commodity, or to entrust one's affairs to some one or to make peace or to become reconciled, or to abstain from offering opposition in a case. The theological signification of the word is explained in the following verse of the Holy Quran. According to this verse a Muslim is the person who submits himself wholly to God, *i.e.*, who devotes all his faculties to the cause of God, submits his inclinations to His will and sets before himself the sole object of seeking His pleasure, and then keeps undeviatingly to the doing of righteous deeds and employs all his practical powers in the way of God. In other words, the Muslim is wholly submissive to God, in theory as well as in practice: in theory, by considering himself to have been brought into existence solely to know, obey, love and please God, and in practice, by doing sincere deeds of virtue with all the powers, and faculties which God has granted to him with such delight devotion and faithfulness as if he were seeing the Divine image in the looking-glass of his submission.

The verse then goes on to say that the man whose sincerity in belief and practice arises thus out of his resignation to God and love for Him, and whose deeds of righteousness spring from his natural zeal, is the person who deserves true reward in the sight of God, and



there shall come no fear on such persons, nor shall they be grieved, *i. e.*, they enjoy the true happiness of salvation. For, when a person having sincere faith in the person and attributes of the Divine Being is perfectly reconciled to Him and his will is in complete submission to the Divine will, and he finds supreme delight in His obedience, and deeds of virtue instead of being a burden to him are a source of pleasure, the condition is one which can be aptly described only as a state of true salvation and freedom from all restraints. Whatever fruits of salvation will be witnessed in the next world, are only images of this settled state of the soul and embodiments of the spiritual delights and enjoyments of this life. In fact, it is in this world that a man begins to lead a heavenly life, and it is the corrupt and blind life of this world from which the tortures of hell arise.

A glance at the verses quoted above shows clearly that the truth underlying Islam cannot be realized until a person devotes all his physical and mental faculties to the glory of God, and returns to Him the charge which is committed to his care, and witnesses, not only in theory but also in the looking-glass of practice, the reality of the Islam which he professes. He who claims to be a Muslim should show that his hands and his feet, his heart and his head, his wisdom and his understanding, his anger and his mercy, his mildness and his knowledge, and all his spiritual and physical powers, his glory and his wealth, his comfort and his delight, and whatever he claims as his, externally as well as internally, his very intentions and the suggestions of his mind, and the passions and inclinations of his soul, are all in such complete submission to his God as the members of the body act in silent obedience to the volition of a man. In short, to be a true Muslim, the faithfulness and sincerity of a man towards God should reach the high degree where every thing that belongs to him should become the property of God, and the members of his body and all his faculties should be so devoted to the service of God as if they were instruments and agencies working under Divine control.

It would further appear, on a consideration of the verses quoted above, that the devotion of life to the cause of God, which is the essence of Islam, consist of two parts. In the first place, a person should consider Almighty God



as the sole object of his worship, desire and love, and none else should share the reverence, love, fear and hope which are entertained towards Him. The name of God should be hallowed and glorified, and all His commandments, injunctions and ordinances prescribed to men, as well as all the decrees of heaven, should be submitted to with one's whole heart and soul and with perfect humility and submissiveness. And further, a man should acquire a complete and comprehensive knowledge of all those pure truths and sublime verities which lead a man to know and comprehend the vast and mighty powers of the Divine Being, the majesty of His rule and kingdom and His numerous blessings and great favors. The second part of a man's devotion of his life to the service of God consists in his serving his fellow-beings and sympathising with them, and showing compassion and forbearance to them, bearing hardships for their comfort and enduring pain for their happiness.

It is clear from the above that the essence of Islam is most sublime, and no one can truly be designated by the title of Muslim until he wholly surrenders himself to Almighty God with all his powers, faculties, inclinations and intentions, and regarding his own self with all its concomitants as a mere nothing devotes all his energies to the glorification of God. A person becomes a Muslim in fact when his life of negligence undergoes a mighty transformation, and the existence of the disobedient spirit with all its passion having been obliterated once for all, a new life, which is in God and solely for Him, is granted to him after this death, a life of sublime purity which has no aim but obedience to God and sympathy with man. The obedience to God which Islam requires must be such a complete submission of the soul to Him that a man should be ready to suffer every dishonor and disgrace to make known the honor and glory of the Divine Being, and to accept a thousand deaths to make the unity of His name live. In obedience to Him, one of his hands should be willing to cut off the other, and the love of the respect of His commandments and the thirst for seeking His pleasure should make sin so hateful in his sight and so horrible to him as if it were a fire that would burn him, or a poison that would destroy him, or a lightning that would consume him, from which he should fly away with all his might. In short, he should submit his



own will to the will of God, and overcome every obstacle in seeking His union, and dis sever all connections to establish connection with Him. So far as to obedience to God which a true Muslim should show, but he must also be engaged in serving the cause of humanity. He should be ready to extend his sympathy to every human being, and to lend a helping hand to every one who stands in need of his assistance. Men stand in need of each other in various ways, and they have been so created by God. The true Muslim assists his fellow-beings in that in which they need his assistance so far as it lies in his power, not out of any selfish motives but simply for the sake of God and in obedience to His commandments. He tries for their welfare in this world as well as in the next. But such a devotion to Divine cause is impossible of attainment unless all the human faculties, and all the members of the human body, are so deeply coloured with Divine obedience, that they are as Divine instrumentalities through which Divine purposes are effected, or as a looking-glass in which Divine will is clearly imaged forth. When obedience to, and service of, God reach this high degree of perfection, then, by the blessing of this Divine baptism, the person who attains to this degree reaches the spiritual stage at which it is perfectly right to say of him, in a spiritual sense, that his eyes are the eyes of God, his tongue the tongue of God, his hands the hands of God, his ears the ears of God, and his feet the feet of God. For, all the members of his body and all his energies being perfectly under the control of Divine will, and being guided by Divine intention, and working in obedience to Divine control, have in them the qualifications which entitled them to be called the images of God. The fact is that as the physical organs of a man work in complete obedience to his volitions, so the perfect man cannot offer any opposition to the will of God, and acts in perfect obedience to it, and the majesty, unity, lordship and godship of the Divine Being as well as His will and wish, are as dear to his heart as to God Himself. This mighty obedience to God and wonderful devotion to His cause when characterized by deep love, true sincerity and a perfect inclining to God, are the true realities and essence of the Islam which is granted only after a mortification of all desires and passions.



It should further be noted that the verse quoted above refers to the three stages of spiritual growth, viz., *fana*, *baga* and *liqa*. The complete submission spoken of in the words *aslama wajhillah* which requires a total surrender to God of the faculties and members of the body, and of all that belongs to a man, is the state of *fana*, or annihilation. For, when a man submits his own self with all his energies to God, and devotes them wholly to His service, his own desires and passions being mortified, he experience a sort of death which is termed *fana* or annihilation by the Sufis. The second stage, viz., that of *baga*, or ever lasting life, is referred to in the words *wahova mohsinun* for, when after a complete annihilation and utter mortification of all carnal desires and passions, a man, is moved to action by Divine power and attraction, it is a new life which is generated by a heavenly magnetism when all earthly connections are cut off, and this second life is technically termed *baga*. The closing words of the verse indicate the third stage, which is termed *liqa*, where a man meets with his reward, and where grief and anxiety terminate. For, when a man's knowledge of God, his certainty and love, and his trust in God, reach such a high degree, that he does not consider the reward of his sincerity, faith and loyalty as merely imaginary and prospective, but as an absolute certainty, as one which he had already tasted and obtained and when he is so conscious of the existence of the Divine Being as if he had already seen Him, every fear of the future being removed and every gnawing grief and anxiety being obliterated, this state, in which spiritual blessings are actually attained, and which is free from every doubt and suspense, every saddening expectation of the future, is the state of *liqa*. The word *Muhsin* occurring in the verse is also indicative of this state of *liqa*, for *ihsan*, according to an explanation of the word given by the Holy Prophet, means the state of perfection in the worship of God in which a person is so conscious of the Divine presence as if he were actually seeing God. This state of *liqa* or seeing God is perfectly realized by the spiritual wayfarer when every shade of humanity is perfectly hidden under Divine garb, and Divine lights pervade a human being as fire pervades a red-hot piece of iron. Many have stumbled at this stage by mistaking an apparent union for oneness of personalities. Those



who have reached this stage are called by some Sufis as the children of God, because they have taken a shelter in the bosom of Divine attributes, and as a child has some likeness to his parent in his features, they too have by being clothed in Divine morals, attained in spirit a certain resemblance to Divine attributes. Such names, though not freely applied in the language of law, are, as a matter of fact, inferred by the wise from allusions contained in sacred terminology. Thus the Holy Quran says on one occasion : "Remember God as you remember your own father." Had the use of such words been forbidden even in a metaphorical sense, Almighty God would not have used in His Holy Word a form of expression which could lead to the contrary conclusion.

In the stage of *liqa*, a man is often able to do deeds which manifest a superhuman power. For instance, our lord and master, the most excellent of all prophets, the seal of prophets, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, threw a handful of stones at unbelievers in the battle of Badr, and that handful was cast not by the efficacy of any prayer offered at that moment by the Holy Prophet, but by his own inherent spiritual power. But it showed Divine power and its effect on the hostile forces was truly supernatural, for there was not a single man of them whose eye it did not strike, and being as blind men, they were dispersed in great perplexity, and fled in every direction like drunkards and mad men. It is to this miracle of the Holy Prophet that the Holy Quran refers in the verse : "And when thou didst cast the handful of stones, thou didst not cast it but Almighty God did cast it, *i.e.*, Divine power worked in it, for human power could not effect what was effected by that handful." Another miracle of the Holy Prophet, performed by his own power, is that of rending the moon, for it took place on his merely raising his finger, which had in it a Divine power and without adverting to prayer. Several other miracles of the Holy Prophet performed by the Divine power which he possessed are also related in trustworthy narratives. It was by his own power, which had hidden beneath it a Divine power, that he wrought all such miracles. The Brahmoos or the philosophers or the Naichries may deny such miracles because they cannot conceive this high stage of spiritual perfection, where Divine powers are granted to



human beings as shadows of the actual Divine powers. If they laugh at these things, they are only to be pitied, for they have not witnessed such spiritual excellence, and not only is their spirituality in a very defective state but they have even no desire to make any advancement in this direction.

The Divine power disclosed in such miracles has been sadly misconstrued by the Christians who have taken a man for a God on the supposition that he wrought certain miracles of this type, though even as related they are far inferior to the miracles of our Holy Prophet. It is contended that as Jesus restored the dead to life, and healed some men suffering from apoplexy and leprosy by his own power and not by means of prayers, he must therefore be supposed to be actually not metaphorically, the son of God, or even God Himself. This is due to Christian ignorance as to the spiritual heights to which a man can rise. If what Jesus did is sufficient to make a man God, our Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of God be upon him, is most entitled to Godhead; for the miracles which he wrought with his Divine power far excel the miracles of Jesus. And not only did the Holy Prophet show such signs himself, but he has left, as an inheritance among his followers, a long series of such signs which have always been manifested in every age according to the need of the time, and shall continue to be so manifested till the Day of Judgment. The Divine power which has thus been breathed by the Holy Prophet into his righteous followers is unparalled, and the like of it cannot be claimed by the followers of any other prophet. It is the height of absurdity to take a man for God on the strength of such extraordinary signs, and if this folly is to be allowed, there would be no end of gods in the world.

It should, however, be borne in mind that such miracles of powers, though they no doubt, are from God, can, in no way, be equal to the mighty deeds of God, which are manifested without the intervention of the volition of any human being, nor is such equality indeed a thing desirable. It is for this reason that when a prophet or a saint shows such an extraordinary sign by his own power and without resorting to prayer, such deed, though it has more than mortal power, does not manifest the high degree of power which is manifested



in the Divine deeds brought about directly by the mighty power of God. A miracle of power wrought by a prophet has certain signs of inferiority to Divine deeds, so that the difference between the works of God and the work of man may be apparent even to a superficial eye. It is for this reasons that the rod of Moses, notwithstanding the wonders which were displayed through it, remained a rod after all, and the birds made by Jesus, though their flight is mentioned in the Quran, were no more than images of clay, and life was never actually breathed into them. As regards the miracles wrought by the power of the Holy Prophet, inasmuch as he was a perfect manifestation of Divine power and glory, it is no doubt difficult to point out exactly the human element in them, still we are bound to say that there must have been some circumstance distinguishing them from the works of God, however, nice the distinction may be.

From what has been said above, it would be clear when a man reaches the stage of *liqa*, it sometimes happens in a moment of transport that he does deeds which have in them a Divine power. The person who leads a great part of his life in the close company of such a one, often witnesses manifestations of such power, for in a wave of spiritual enthusiasm Divine attributes are momentarily imparted to a man so that his mercy is the mercy of God and his wrath the wrath of God. Such a man in such intervals works under Divine control ; and if he says that thing should be, it comes into existence ; and if he looks upon some one in wrath, such person is visited with Divine vengeance ; and if he looks upon some one with compassion, Almighty God has also mercy on the man. As the command of God, when he says to a thing " Be," necessarily produce the required result, the command of a person who has attained to the stage of *liqa*, in moments of transport, also does not fail to produce the desired end. The reason of this, as already stated, is, that on account of his very close and deep connection with Almighty God such a person becomes a manifestation of Divine power, and Divine glories encircle him permanently, and all barriers being removed, he attains the true object of his soul's love. As he is himself blessed on account of this union with his beloved one, everything to him is also blessed, and there is a blessing in his words and in his deeds,



and a blessing in his movements and environments. Everything that comes in contact with him has a blessing imparted to it. The house where he lives and the doors of his house are all blessed, and he witnesses these blessings of God in all his belongings, and smells their sweet odour. When he goes on a journey, Almighty God with all His blessings is with him ; and when he comes home, he brings with him a flood of light. A human being no doubt, but he is a wonderful man and is known fully to none but God.

It should also be pointed out that when the stage of complete submission to the Divine Being, which is the true significance of Islam, and which is called *fana* or annihilation in the terminology of the Sufis and *istiqamat* in the language of the Holy Quran, is attained, the stages of *baqa* and *liqa* follow as a natural consequence. For, when a man being completely freed of all that is foreign to God, and having got rid of all the desires and intentions of his own self reaches the stage of *fana*, the next stage of *baqa* begins immediately afterwards, and no sooner a death comes over the first life than a new life is breathed into him. But so long as a man is not firmly established in the stage of *fana*, and a thorough inclination to God is not firmly rooted in his very nature, the stage of *baqa* does not follow. *Baqa* requires that every affectation of obedience to God should cease, and submission to Him should spring forth from the heart itself with a natural force, so that a man should feel true pleasure in the worship and remembrance of God, as others feel it in yielding to their desires and passions, and all desires being utterly excluded from the heart, the will of God alone should have perfect dominion over it. When firmness marks the second stage, and a new life pervades the whole nature of the spiritual wayfarer and becomes a part and parcel of his life, when a light is seen descending from heaven, which at once dispels every darkness and removes every veil, generating a sweet and charming love which was not known before, and making the heart feel a coolness, calmness, tranquility and bliss, when bright, sweet, blessed, blissful, beautiful, elegant and goodly words from a Divine source begin to descend constantly, whether in a sleeping or wakeful condition, bringing with them a transportation of joy and a supreme delight, when a man finds



himself drawn to God so powerfully that he cannot veil except by cherishing love for Him, when he is not only ready to sacrifice his property, children, honor and life and everything that is his in the way of God, but has already sacrificed all these in his mind, when he is drawn by a mighty magnetism for which he can assign no reason, when he finds himself illumined by a flood of light within him as bright as the meridian sun, when he witnesses streams of sincerity, love and faithfulness flowing within him with mighty torrents, when he feels momentarily as if Almighty God had made His descent upon his heart, when all these signs are clearly and perceptibly felt, then he should rejoice and sing hymns of praise and thanksgivings to God that he has reached the goal of spiritual perfection, which is termed *liqa*. In this final stage a man feels that his soul has been purified from all drosses and carnal desires as if by washing him in pure water repeatedly, that after being granted a new life the throne of Majesty of the Lord of the worlds has been set up in his heart, and that the bright and beautiful face of the holy and living God, with its shining lights and its supremely attractive beauty, has for ever been brought before his eyes. But it should not be forgotten that both these stages of *baqa* and *liqa* are not attained by striving after them but are granted to the spiritual wayfarer by the grace of God. All striving and labour end when a man reaches the stage of *fana*. There the journey of the spiritual wayfarer comes to an end and human excellences are brought to a perfection. When this stage is reached, a gentle current of the cool breeze of Divine grace takes the pilgrim to the second and third stage.

It would appear from the above that in reaching the stages of *baqa* and *liqa*, no effort or striving on the part of the pilgrim is needed, but these are merely consequences of the stage of *fana* which he has already reached. In the stage of *fana* a pure love is generated in the human heart by Almighty God, and upon it falls a flame of Divine love, and this is designated as the stage of *baqa* and *liqa*. When Divine love descends upon the love generated in the human heart, from the contact of these two loves arises a shining and perfect image of the holy spirit and it has an effulgence in the stage of *liqa* which transcends every light. The extraordinary signs shown



by such men, by the power in them as referred to above are also due to the constant company of the light of the holy spirit which they enjoy. They are never cut off from this light, nor is it ever taken away from them. It is emitted with their breath, and falls with their sight upon every thing upon which they cast their sight, and in their words it is manifested to people. This is the light which is termed the holy spirit but it is not actually that spirit itself. The real holy spirit has its habitation on the heavens, and the holy spirit which makes its constant habitation in pure hearts and pure heads, and from which they are not separated even for the twinkling of an eye, is the image of the real holy spirit. The person who thinks that the holy spirit with all its lights and effects is ever taken away from the righteous is guilty of a most serious error and of slighting the chosen ones of God. When the spirit of holiness descends upon a person, its connection with him is as close and deep as that of the soul with the body. It becomes their eyesight and thus gives a new vision to their eyes ; it becomes their power of hearing and imparts to the ears a spiritual sense of hearing ; it becomes the speech of their tongue, the piety of their heart, and the intelligence of their brain ; it permeates their hands and their feet ; in short it dispels the slightest shade of darkness from the human heart and imparts a light to the whole body of man, from head to foot. If it were to leave them for the twinkling of an eye, darkness would take its place. But to the perfect ones the holy spirit is granted as a constant good associate, and it is not allowed to be away from them for a single moment ; for then it will have to be supposed that darkness took possession of them after they had been brought to light, and that the devil had the mastery over them after they had been granted a protection for Him, and that their spiritual senses having been once awakened, were again benumbed and deadened. It is not so. The light of the righteous is never extinguished, not for a single moment, and the signs of light which are once granted to them are never taken away.

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#### THE BLESSINGS OF ISLAM.

What is the fruit which a man can reap by following Islam, is a most important question which offers itself



for solution. And the answer is plain and simple. When a man with a true search for his Lord and Master is firmly established in the faith of Islam and completely resigned to His will so that all his mental and physical powers are, not by any constraint and exertion but freely and naturally, engaged solely in the service of God, the final and permanent fruit of this state of submission is a wonderful transformation which he witnesses in his life. The highest manifestations of Divine guidance unimpeded by any obstacle overshadow him, and manifold blessings descend upon him. The truth of the injunctions and beliefs which are accepted at the outset on grounds of probability and on the authority of others as a matter of faith, is ultimately made clear and fully realized by clear revelations and sure and certain inspirations. The doors that were formerly closed to the seeker are thrown wide open, and the hidden truths and secrets of law and religion are made manifest. He is made to travel vast journeys in the kingdom of God, so that he may attain to perfection in Divine knowledge and certainty of Divine existence. Divine blessing is imparted to his tongue and his speech, his words and his deeds, and all his movements. He is granted an extraordinary courage, perseverance and bravery, and set on the high pinnacle where a man's breast is opened for the favourable acceptance of truth. Being perfectly freed from narrowness, meanness, avarice, repeated stumbling, shortsightedness, slavery of passion, depravity and vileness of morals and every trace of the darkness of sensuality caused by the veils of humanity, he is filled with the light of Divine morals. Being thus perfectly transformed, he dons the clothing of a new birth. When he hears and sees, he hears and sees from God ; and when he moves or stands, he moves or stands with God. His wrath is the wrath of God, and his mercy the mercy of God. His prayers are then granted on account of his election and nearness to God and not on account of any affliction, and their acceptance leads to his welfare and not to his ruin. He is upon the earth an argument for the existence of God and a Divine protection to the creatures. There is rejoicing in heaven because of his existence upon earth. The highest gift which he receives from God is, that God speaks to him and addresses him, and these words of the Divine Being are free from every doubt and darkness and descend



upon his heart with the calmness of moonlight and have in them a powerful bliss and bring with them a satisfaction, content and tranquility of mind. Such words of the Divine Being are a thing distinct from Divine inspiration, for the fountain of inspiration is in constant flow for those who have reached this stage, and it is with the holy spirit that they speak or hear or see, and by the holy spirit that their inclinations are breathed into them. As images of the person spoken of in the verse: "Out of his desire he does not speak, but every word that he utters is a revelation that is revealed to him," they speak and move by Divine inspiration. But the words spoken by God to His chosen ones, who are perfectly established in Islam, are quite distinct from this constant inspiration and breathings of the holy spirit. The words come to them from the mouth of God and belong to the category of *wahy-i-matlu*. They receive answers to their questions from Almighty God in the same manner as a friend receives answer from his friend. This perfect and highest form of revelation cannot be defined otherwise than by saying that it is a peculiar manifestation of Divine glory, and communicated through the angel that has nearest access to the Divine Being. The object of this communication is to inform the recipient of the acceptance of his prayers, or to disclose to him some deep secret unknown to him, or to reveal to him some events of the future, or to make known to him the pleasure or displeasure of God in any matter, or to make him attain, in some other respects certainty and a perfect Divine knowledge. In short, such revelation is the voice of God, and He speaks to His servant to bring him to true satisfaction and perfect knowledge. It is impossible to give any description of it beyond the fact that it is a voice from Almighty God due solely to a Divine impulse and breathing, and is not the result of any contemplation or reflection on the part of the man or any desire of the soul. It is a voice in sweet and blissful words, and has within it a manifestation of Divine glory and Divine majesty, and is so felt by its recipient.

The question would naturally arise here in the mind of ever seeker after truth as to what he should do in order to attain to the stage of perfection in which he can be the recipient of the favour of Divine revelation. The answer to this question is, that is after a new life with



new faculties and new powers is granted that a man receives that favour of being spoken to be God. But the new life does not begin until the previous life is brought to extinction, by which is meant a true and real sacrifice of all desires, wealth, honor and dignity, and complete annihilation of the passions of flesh. The second life in which a man receives the gift of revelation is breathed on the extinction of life of desires and passions. The signs of such extinction are clearly seen by the seeker. Their former characteristics of the soul and passions of the flesh give place to new characteristics and new impulses, and a mighty transformation in the nature is clearly witnessed. The conditions of morality, faith and worship are so thoroughly changed that they appear to have been coloured in another dye. In short, the seeker finds himself quite a new man when he considers his own condition and finds a new God revealed to him, so thoroughly transformed is his conception of the Divine Being. A new bliss is felt in the praise and remembrance of God, and a new delight is experienced in the patience which a man shows under sufferings. The soul has an unbounded trust in God and feels an utter indifference to, and absolute independence of, all besides. The contemplation of Divine existence and presence reigns so supreme in the heart that every existence besides God is naught to him, and all plans and means are without any value or importance. His sincerity and faithfulness to God is so great that a conception of the greatest difficulties leaves no burden upon the mind; nay, instead of pain a pleasure is felt in sufferings, and a delight is experienced in difficulties. When all these signs are witnessed, it should be then clearly understood that the previous life is utterly annihilated.

Death upon the previous life brings with it wonderful new powers. There are things which men say but cannot do, and ways which they see but cannot walk in, and loads of which they ascertain the weight but which they cannot lift up; but the person whose life of physical passions undergoes a death, is granted power for all these things for it is not his own mortal power with which he works, but it is the power of God which works in him. It is this Divine power which makes him as steady as a mountain. It grants him a faithful heart with which he is able to do such mighty deeds for the



manifestation of the glory of God, and to show such faithfulness and perseverance in his way as it is not within the power of any mortal to do or show. He cuts asunder all his connections from all besides God, and surmounts all obstacles that hinder him in the slightest degree from union with God. His faithfulness and perseverance are tried in the crucible of temptations and sufferings and proved to be genuine. The heavy sufferings to which he is subjected, and the great difficulties with which his way is beset, would crush down mountains and darken the light of the sun and the moon, but he shows extraordinary perseverance and suffers all hardships and faces all difficulties with an open heart. Even if he were ground to dust in the mortar of sufferings, "I am with God" would still be the voice that would proceed from the powder. When a person reaches this stage, he is no more a man of this world, and is granted the guidance and high place granted to the holy prophets and messengers of God before him, as if he were their image. Such a man becomes the inheritor of the blessings granted to the prophets and he is their vicegerent upon earth. What is termed *mujiza* in the prophets is termed *karamat* in him and what is termed *ismut* (sinlessness) in the prophets is called *mahfuziyyat* (protection) in him, and what is called *nabuwat* (prophethood) in the prophet is designated *muhaddisiyyat* in him. The distinction in these designations does not arise out of a difference of quality but a difference of degree.

There arises the further question, when and under what circumstances is the person, who is granted the blessings of being spoken to by God, in a fixed condition to receive the Word of God. Now, though no particular time can be fixed for the revelation of the Word of God, yet in sufferings and difficulties the Word of God comes to His righteous servants to solace and strengthen them. When they are troubled on every side and crushed with unbearable sufferings and calamities and their affliction reaches its climax, the Divine attribute of speech is then manifested upon their hearts and they are comforted and consoled with sweet and charming Divine words. The truth is that the state of perfect submission and utter helplessness of the inspired one is a powerful incentive to kindle the flame of inspiration.



When a recipient of the Word of God is cast into the excessively heated furnace of afflictions and encompassed with thorough distress, when excessive grief and sorrow mixed with perfect humility, faithfulness and sincerity engross all his ideas, he is suddenly brought opposite to the rays of Divine glory which falling upon him illumine his whole being. This light of Divine glory is manifested sometimes in the form of revelation and sometimes in the form of spoken words. Like the candle, which is lighted by being brought near a flame of fire, the heart that turns to God is illumined with Divine light. The perfect one who knows God is thus in a most suitable condition to receive the Word of God when in his affliction he falls down on the Divine threshold in utter helplessness, and having cut asunder all connections, strengthens anew his connection with, and resignation to, God. When with a heart replete with grief and sorrow, he cries out for Divine help, Almighty God listens to his cry and gives him an answer in loving and sweet words, and having compassion upon him accepts his prayers. It is downright atheism to think that prayer has no efficacy and that the urging of a prayer is utterly useless in bringing about the attainment of an object. It is one of the highest graces of the Divine Being which is shown to His servants, that he accepts their prayers and grants their requests very frequently, however hard their fulfilment may be. What is *walayati* (sainthood) but the attainment of such a nearness to, and dignity in, the presence of the Almighty Lord as brings to one the gift and favor of having his prayers accepted most of all? The *wali* or the saint is the friend of God, and it is a test of sincere friendship that his requests be granted on most occasions. It is sheer ignorance of the true principles of the faith of Islam and of the Book of God, to assert that by the acceptance of prayer is meant nothing more than that Almighty God hears the prayer. If the mere hearing of a prayer is its acceptance, then every one has a right to say that his prayers are not rejected. Almighty God knows and hears what is done or said, for He is the Knowing and the Hearer, but in this there is no difference between the righteous and the unrighteous. If only the hearing of the prayer is all that is meant by acceptance, the believer and the unbeliever are on a par in the prayers they offer, for Almighty God hears the unjust



as much as He hears the just. To draw any line between the faithful and the unfaithful while taking this view of the acceptance of prayer is to lay down an absolutely arbitrary distinction. But this view is utterly opposed to the Holy Quran. The prayer of the faithful servants of God is accepted of a certainty ; or, if its acceptance does not tend to the welfare of the suppliant, he is informed of the fact in sweet and soothing words coming from the Divine Being. Almighty God is the fountain-head of mercy and compassion, and He is most of all merciful and compassionate towards His faithful servant. He comforts him in his afflictions, and takes him by the hand and protects him from every mischief. Even if the whole world turns against him, Almighty God grants victory to His chosen one, and extends the days of his peace and safety. His enemy desires his failure and destruction, but it is the enemy who is made to taste of the bitter cup of failures, and it is he who is ultimately brought to destruction. The curses of the enemy He turns back against himself, and brings their evil effect upon him, while for His faithful servant He displays His wonderful signs by the acceptance of his prayers, How is a miracle wrought ? The acceptance of the prayer of a faithful servant of God brings about the performance of most difficult and apparently impossible deeds which confounds reason and throws the whole world into a surprise. This is not an assertion devoid of argument. We can afford the clearest and most conclusive proof of it, but he who shuts his own eyes cannot see the light of the sun.

It should be further borne in mind that for proof of the blessings and fruits of Islam stated above, we do not refer the seeker after truth only to the past. Islam is not a dead religion, and we are not compelled to say that the blessings of Islam are left behind. It is in fact the unique excellence of the holy faith of Islam that its blessings are unbroken and continuous. It offers not only its blessings in the past but similar blessings even now. The world stands ever in need of blessings and heavenly signs, and it is absurd to suppose that its stood in need of such signs in the past but can do without them now. Man is a weak creature, and he walks blindly until he is shown traces of the heavenly kingdom ; and his faith is a blind faith until he witnesses the wonderful signs of the



existence and power of God. The signs shown in a previous age are of no avail in a later age unless they are renewed. The relation of stories of wonders displayed in the past can never produce the conviction which signs witnessed by a man himself can do. Every new century is the inauguration of a new era and the beginning, as it were, of a new world. The God of Islam, who is the true God, therefore manifests new signs in each new world ; and in the commencement of every new century, especially when the world goes astray from probity and righteousness and is involved in darkness, He raises a vicegerent of the Holy Prophet, in the looking glass of whose nature the person of the Holy Prophet is imaged forth. The representative so raised shows the excellences of the Holy Prophet whom he follows and establishes the charge against his opponents by truth, by showing the reality and by exposing them ; by truth, because He shows that the prophet whom they rejected was a true prophet, and shows the heavenly signs for his truth ; by showing the reality, because he solves all difficulties in the comprehension of the religion of the prophet, and removes all doubts that are entertained with respect to it, and refutes all objections that are urged against it and by exposing them, because He rends asunder all the veils under which they hide themselves and lays bare before the world their folly in not comprehending nice points of religious truths, their love of remissness, ignorance and darkness, and their being forsaken by God and cut off from communion with Him. The perfect man who is raised for this purpose is a recipient of Divine revelation, and he is purified and blessed and has his prayers accepted by God. He shows with clearness that God exists and that He is powerful over all, sees, hears and knows everything, and regulates affairs according to His will, that prayers are in fact accepted and have an efficacy and that the men of God actually show heavenly signs. He is not only himself rich in Divine knowledge, but his appearance brings about a life in the faith of the people. The heavenly signs which were rejected and scoffed at by people as opposed to the laws of nature and contrary to reason, or, if treated with respect, were considered at the most to be stories, are not only accepted as truths at his appearance because of their renewal at his hands, but the absurdity of the former position is also fully realised.



It is then clearly seen and even regreted that what was taken to wisdom was really folly, and that which was considered to be knowledge of the law of nature was in fact ignorance. In short, the holy one raised by God falls like a flame upon the world and gives a light to every one according to his capacity. Sometimes, he is at first tried, thrown into afflictions, persecuted on all sides, abused and injured by all possible means, and attempt is made to bring him to disgrace, but as he has with him the argument of truth and Divine assistance, he overcomes all difficulties and vanquishes his enemies, and the rays of the light of his truth are made to pierce into the world by a powerful hand. When Almighty God seesthat the earth has rejected him, He commands the holy host of heaven to bear testimony to his truth. Therefore a clear and bright testimony comes down for his sake from heaven in the form of extraordinary heavenly signs, acceptance of prayer and the disclosure through him of deep religious truths and verities. This heavenly testimony gives sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and the power of speech to the dumb. There are many who are drawn at that time to the truth ; but blessed are they who accept him previously for they on account of their strength of faith are granted the dignity of the *siddiqs* (the truthful servants of God). But this is the Grace of Gad, and He bestows it upon whom He wills.

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### THE HOLY SPIRIT.

It is abundantly clear from the Holy Quran that the holy spirit keeps constant company with the chosen ones of God and that they never part with it. Nay more, we learn from the Holy Book that the holy spirit is granted to every true believer. Of the verses which clearly bear on this subject is the following : "Over every soul there is a protector," which means that Almighty God has appointed a protecting angel for every soul which keeps back Satan and saves the soul from error and destruction. This is the holy spirit which in the case of the chosen ones of God makes Satan quite powerless. This is clearly stated in another verse of the Holy Quran which runs thus : In this verse Almighty God tells Satan that he cannot have any power over His chosen servants. This is because the holy spirit is always with them, and



therefore they are not left for a single moment in the power of Satan. Even if we take *hafiz* in the first verse to mean the guardian angel over the body of every human being, the conclusion cannot be escaped that this verse also speaks of the guardian angel over the soul. For, it cannot be conceived that a man should have guardian angels in perpetual attendance upon him physically, but that spiritually no such arrangement should have been made for his protection. As a matter of fact, the protection of the soul is a matter of far greater consequence than the protection of the body, for the effect of the former extends to eternity, while that of the latter is merely ephemeral. The merciful and gracious God who has out of His unbounded mercy been so considerate for the physical requirements of man, cannot be supposed to have utterly neglected the requirements of his spirit. All this shows that Almighty God has appointed a guardian angel for the spiritual protection of the righteous, and this is in other words called the holy spirit.

Verses upon the above subject abound in the Holy Quran. The following are a few of them : which respectively mean: "And over you are guardians," "Almighty God sends over you the guarding angels," and "There are for him watchers on every side, *i.e.*, physically as well as spiritually, which protect him by the command of God." Under this verse, the author of the *Ma'alim* (a commentary of the Holy Quran), cites a tradition to the effect that an angel has charged over every human being which keeps constant company with him and protects him in the state of wakefulness as well as sleep from the devils and other evils. Ibn-i-Jareer also quotes several traditions, in one of which it is stated that there are angels which constantly live with a man to protect him from evils, and in another that there is no man for whose protection an angel is not appointed to keep constant company with him, while in a third tradition it is related that a number of angels always remains with him to serve him in various ways, while Satan and his children, day and night, lie in ambush for him. The following tradition is also related by the same author in this connection : "Abdulla reports that the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said : 'There is none of you with whom there is not an associate from among



the Jinns and an associate from among the angels.' The companion asked, 'and thou too, O Prophet of God, hast thou too such associates?' And the Holy Prophet answered : 'I too have such associates but Almighty God has made my associate from among the Jinns obedient to me, so that he does not lead me to aught but virtue and goodness.' " This tradition establishes in clear and conclusive words that as there is always with a man an inviter to evil, so there is also constantly with him an inviter to goodness. Indeed it would have been a great blot upon Divine mercy and goodness if God had appointed for man one who were to insinuate evil constantly into his heart, and entering into his very nature were to make darkness pervade within him, but had left him without an associate who keeping constant company with him were to direct him into the paths of virtue and goodness, and entering into the inmost light of his heart were to expel the evil one and replace darkness by a light which were never to be extinguished, so that both scales of the balance should have been even.

We will now consider one or two objections to what has been stated above. The first of these is that if the holy spirit is granted only to the righteous servants of God, who have attained the stages of *baqa* and *liqa*; the highest stages in the spiritual growth of a man, how can it be a guardian over every man? The fact is that the holy spirit, no doubt, descends in full power upon the chosen ones of God who have attained the highest stage of spiritual perfection, but it is at the same time granted to every one in proportion to his love and sincerity and his spiritual advancement. The perfect manifestation of the holy spirit takes place, as we have already said, when a man having attained the stages of *baqa* and *liqa*, the flame of Divine love descends upon his love and illuminates his whole heart and soul. This highest manifestation of the holy spirit is so transcendent above all its manifestations in the case of ordinary human beings, that the latter may practically be regarded as naught when speaking of the former, but for all that their existence cannot be denied. When a man entertains love towards God, Divine love descends upon him in proportion to his love, for Almighty God does not reject the love of a human being however faint it may be. The light of the holy spirit is kindled within a man only in proportion to his love, and the



weaker the awakening of the human mind to the love of God, the fainter the torch of the holy spirit which is kindled within the human heart. It is an established Divine law that the love of God for a man is only in proportion to his love for God. The mightier the torrent of love which flows from the human heart, the more powerful the stream of love which flows from the Divine source. When two such powerful streams join together, a magnificent light is kindled which in religious terminology is called the holy spirit. But the power of the holy spirit depends upon the power of the love which is generated in the human heart. As you see that a very small quantity of sugar in a large jar cannot make the water sweet, but still the existence of sugar in the water cannot be denied, so is the case with the holy spirit. In men in whom the flame of love is almost smothered, the holy spirit is in a very weak and defective state, but its presence even in them cannot be denied. A man who is very low in morality is sometimes incited to deeds of virtue by the holy spirit, which shows that even in him its voice is not altogether dead. The unrighteous and sinful man sees sometimes a true vision, and this according to the Holy Quran and authentic traditions is by the working of the holy spirit. But this is naught in comparison with the mighty connection which the holy spirit has with the chosen and righteous servants of God.

Another question arises here, *viz.*, if Almighty God has out of His mercy appointed the holy spirit to keep men back from the evil course, why does man sin at all? and why does he disbelieve or disobey Divine commandments? This question arises out of a misunderstanding of the functions of the holy spirit. Almighty God has created two kinds of attraction for man or two spiritual inviters, an inviter to virtue which is called the holy spirit, and an inviter to evil which is called *Iblis* or Satan. Their function is simply to invite a man to a particular course and not to compel him to adopt it. It is to this that the verse of the Holy Quran refers. They are inspired (according) as their hearts incline to good or evil by which it is meant that Almighty God inspires evil as well as goodness into the human heart. Evil is insinuated by the spirit of evil which is Satan, and goodness by the spirit of goodness which is the holy spirit.



As God is the cause of causes, therefore in the above-mentioned verse God is described as the inspirer of both kinds of idea, because independently of God Satan has no power to insinuate evil into the heart of a man, nor the holy spirit any power to guide a man into the path of virtue.

The blind opponents of Islam sometimes bring forward the objection against this teaching regarding the insinuations of the evil spirit that according to it Almighty God Himself leads men astray because He has created the spirit of evil for this purpose. But this is an error. The Holy Quran does not teach that Satan has been given any authority over men or that he can compel them to walk in the evil course, or that God has appointed only the spirit of evil to invite them to vice. The true teaching of the Holy Book is that as a trial man is so made as to be liable to partake equally of the angelic and the diabolic touch, in other words he is placed between an inviter to goodness and an inviter to evil, so that he may deserve good reward or punishment according as he follows the one or the other. Had man been so created that all his desires and passions could have led him only to virtue, or had it not been in his nature ever to incline to evil, he would not have deserved any praise for doing what it would have been impossible for him not to do or for avoiding what from his very nature he could not do. For instance, we have not in our bodies a poison like that of the scorpion or the serpent, and therefore it is not a merit in us that we do not do the mischief which scorpions and serpents do. From this, it is clear that the passions and desires which draw a man to evil are also the cause of the meritoriousness of his deeds, for when a person out of the fear of God subdues his passions and desires, he undoubtedly deserves praise in the sight of God, for he sacrifices his own interests to the pleasure of God. Therefore in the early and middle stages of spiritual growth, the hopes of the spiritual wayfarer arise from the opposite tendencies, and where the opposite tendency does not exist at all, neither has the doer in these stages any hope of reward. But in the final stages of spiritual advancement, the evil tendencies of a man are so utterly subdued that his inviter to evil is in complete submission to his inviter to goodness. But in this



stage, though the evil tendency ceases to exist, yet the reward of his deeds is not lost because he has attained to this stage with manly exertions and noble efforts, and has safely passed through every trial.

Thus it appears from the Holy Quran and authentic traditions that as Almighty God has permitted Satan to be an inviter to evil, so He has appointed the Holy Spirit to be a constant companion of men so that it may invite them to goodness. More than this, we also learn that in the final stages of spiritual growth which are termed *baqa* and *liqa*, the power of Satan is completely destroyed so that he is not any more an inviter to evil but becomes a Muslim, and the light of the holy spirit shines forth in its full effulgence. None but the blind and the ignorant can object to this excellent and pure teaching of the Holy Quran. The truth is that this explanation of the prevalence of evil and goodness in the world, is in fact one of the most convincing miracles of the Holy Quran. It has solved the mystery which no other religious book has done, how there arises in man constantly the strong desire to do good or evil, so much so that its traces are felt even in dreams and visions. In fact, this is the only explanation against which there exists no valid objection and which is in consonance with sound reasoning. This explanation corresponds with what we see in physical nature. It is God who gives light to our eyes but that light is granted through the agency of the sun. Similarly the darkness which is brought on by the night is also from God because He is the prime cause. God has placed within us faculties and powers, but for their exercise we depend upon other external agents. Our eye is not an independent source of light to us, it has only the capability to accept light from without. So also with hearing and other faculties. Thus in the physical world, we find it as an established law that we stand in need of external agents notwithstanding the faculties and powers within us. The ear receives the sound, but independently of the agency of air it cannot serve that purpose. Our faculties are not by themselves sufficient to keep the machine of the human body in motion. Man therefore essentially stands in need of something besides what is within him, and as in the physical so also in the spiritual world. We witness moreover that every blessing which we receive



from God, is granted to us through instruments and agents. Thus there are everywhere in the physical world intermediaries between men and God, and the existence of these proves the existence of spiritual intermediaries which we term angels and Jinns. Just as our physical faculties are not by themselves sufficient to enable us to attain any object in the physical world without the assistance of other agents, so our own spiritual powers cannot by themselves lead us to do good or evil deeds, but here too external intermediaries, which have an existence independent of our internal spiritual powers, are necessary to enable us to do good and evil deeds. A study of the laws of nature shows clearly that there are agents and instruments in the spiritual world, though we may or may not know their nature. This much at least is certain that they are neither God nor our own powers and faculties, but an existence different from both. Of these intermediaries, the one that invites a man to goodness, we call the holy spirit, and the one that invites him to evil is called Satan or Eblis. Though these are seen by those whose spiritual faculties are sufficiently developed, and in visions their existence is clearly felt, yet every one cannot see the holy spirit and the spirit of evil, and for such the arguments given above regarding their existence are clearly satisfactory, for from the effect is determined the existence of the cause. The proof of the existence of God and of angels is one and the same in this respect, for, for ordinary men there is no other proof of the existence of God except that which is deduced from the existence of creatures. In the advanced stage of spiritual growth, the righteous, no doubt, see God with their spiritual growth, the righteous, no doubt, see God with their spiritual eyes and hear His words, but for the ordinary man before whom there yet hangs the veil, the only proof of the existence of God is that which leads from the effect to the cause, and this is exactly the line or argument which proves the existence of the good and evil spirits, otherwise called angels and Jinns. It is the greatest absurdity to reject the existence of the angels while admitting the existence of God, when for both the arguments are exactly the same. And yet some men who call themselves philosophers, are actually guilty of this absurdity.



There are other verses in the Holy Quran which show clearly that the holy spirit is a constant companion of the truly faithful. Thus on one occasion, the Holy Book says : "Oh ye who believe, if you walk in righteousness and fear God, He will grant you that *i.e.*, the holy spirit) which will give you an eminent distinction, and "God will grant you a light, *i.e.*, the light of the holy spirit) which will accompany you constantly." It should be borne in mind that the holy spirit is called the light in the Holy Quran. In another place, we have : "Verily those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah only' and then show perseverance, *i.e.*, no adversity or trial shakes their faithfulness to God—the angels of God descend upon them, saying, 'Do not fear aught nor be grieved, and be happy with the idea of the paradisaical blessing that have been promised to you ; we are your guardians and companions and we are with you always, in this world as well as in the next.'" In another verse, the Holy Quran thus describes the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous : *i.e.*, "What he who was a dead man, and we gave him life and granted him a light, *i.e.*, the light of the holy spirit) with which he walks among the people, *i.e.*, the blessing of his light are witnessed by others—is he like him who is involved in utter darkness from which he cannot get out?" and again, "the living and the dead are not as one." Light and life in the Holy Quran denote the holy spirit on account of their dispelling the darkness of sin and granting a life to the heart. The holy spirit is so called because it is the spirit of holiness which entering into the human heart, grants, a man a new and pure life. Of other verses relating to this subject and showing that the holy spirit is in the constant company of the inspired ones of God, and grants them knowledge, wisdom and purity, we may mention only one verse more which runs thus : "In the hearts of such faithful servants, God has engraved faith and given them assistance with the holy spirit which comes from him." By the engraving of faith in the heart, it is meant that faith has entered into their heart's desires and become a part and parcel of their nature, every insincerity having vanished away. This stage is reached when assisted by the holy spirit a person attains a new life. As the constant presence of



the soul in the body is a source of protection and light to it, so the holy spirit of the new life should make it permanent habitation in the heart and cast a light upon it every hour and every moment, and as the soul gives life to the body, so the holy spirit should be a source of life to the heart and all spiritual faculties. It is for this reason that in the verse quoted above, Almighty God has spoken of the assistance of the whole spirit immediately after the statement that faith was engraven in their hearts. For, when faith enters into the nature of man, he attains really a new life, and this new birth does not take place without the assistance of the holy spirit. In short, the Holy Quran very frequently speaks of the spiritual or new life, and speaks of the true and perfect believers as the living and of the unbelievers as the dead, thus showing that the true believers obtain new life by the entrance of the holy spirit into their hearts while the unbelievers are not granted such life.

That the Holy Prophet was guided in all his words and deeds by Divine revelation, whether detailed or concise, manifest or hidden, clear or obscure, was the undoubted belief of his companions. It is for this reason that all his private affairs and conversations including those relating to his relations with his wives and all matters relating to his eating, drinking, clothing and social relations, have been included in tradition because the reporters believed them to be said or done by the light of the holy spirit. Imam Ahmad recorded a tradition on the authority of Abdulla, son of Umar, in which it is stated that the latter said that he used to write down every word that he heard from the lips of the Holy Prophet in order to commit it to memory. Some men told him not to do so, because the Holy Prophet being a mortal was sometimes in wrath. This he mentioned to the Holy Prophet who is reported to have said : " By Him who holds my life in His hands, every word and deed of mine is in obedience to the Divine commandment."

If it be objected that in those very books of tradition, we find it recorded that the Holy Prophet sometimes erred in his judgment though that error was soon removed, and that therefore he could not on such occasions have been guided by Divine revelation, the answer is that such error in judgment was not unattended with



Divine revelation. The Holy Prophet was not for a single moment removed from the control of God, and the alleged error in judgment is in no way different from the forgetfulness which sometimes attended him in his prayers, giving rise to the solution of necessary points in religion. If, therefore, the Holy Prophet on rare occasions erred in his judgment, such error was meant only for the perfection of faith and to give rise to subtle doctrinal points. But on such occasions, the Holy Prophet was not unattended by the holy spirit. On the other hand, a peculiar Divine control held him on such occasions in entire possession and inclined him to a course which for some particular end was advisable in the sight of God. The Holy Prophet was not involved in the darkness of error for a single moment, but Almighty God by His own Divine control exercised over his person manifested the light of His holy spirit in the form of an error or forgetfulness for particular ends. It is as if running water in a stream were purposely stopped for a few minutes, and immediately afterwards allowed to run again unobstructed with greater force. Similar is the condition of the error in judgment to which the prophets of God are sometimes liable. Their judgment and understanding is always and entirely under Divine control, and for particular ends is led sometimes to a particular course, and when that end is fulfilled, is led back into the right course. Of Jesus it is recorded that he ran to a fig tree to eat of its fruit, and notwithstanding that the holy spirit was in his company, he did not know that there was no fruit on the tree. But this is a rare occurrence. As regards our Holy Prophet, there are about a million of his words and deeds in which we witness clear manifestations and light of Divine glory. That there are one or two cases in which his deeds savour like those of ordinary mortals, does not, in any way, affect the result that he acted and spoke always by the holy spirit and under Divine commandment. On the other hand, their occurrence was necessary so that people might not take him for a God.

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

Casting a glance at the remote past, we see a young child brought up with loving care and tenderness by his parents. He has got several consanguineous



brothers who are jealous of their father's love towards him and cannot bear his tender caresses for him. Accordingly they assemble together to consider the measures of his removal from before the eyes of their father. It is agreed upon at last that he should be taken to and left in some distant uninhabited place where with no human being to take care of him, he should soon die, so that his presence should no more fan the flame of their jealousy, and the object of their father's love being thus taken away, they should have all his love for themselves. With various machinations and devices, they at last succeed in separating the young child from their father, and taking him to a distant jungle, throw him down to the bottom of a well. Let the material eye follow the child into the bottom of that dreary well, where no human figure is seen nor a mortal voice heard. A young child not more than ten or twelve years of age, whose resting-place has been his mother's bosom and whose eye has never met any sight outside the four walls of his house, who is quite unaware of the ups and downs of life, who has never seen or known any adversity, and upon the tablet of whose heart no experience has yet been recorded—this innocent child is cast into a dark well with dreary scenes all around. A materialist with due regard to all these circumstances and the natural course of events, can draw the only conclusion that this young child so tenderly brought up and so cruelly thrown away, must soon perish, sighing and sobbing in grief. But the Book of God tells us that in that dreary place the young child heard a soothing voice in the following words: "I assure thee that time will come when thou in thy grandeur and glory wilt inform thy brethren of this their mischief, while they standing in a humble position before thee, will be so overawed by thy glory that they will not be able even to recognise thee."

The nature of this voice is a matter of deep consideration. There are two points which particularly deserve our attention. In the first place, was it simply a freak, or a fancy of the child, or the result of his previous impressions, or a deep insight into the future. Secondly, whether after long years in which he experienced various reverses and trials, it was fulfilled to the very letter or whether it turned out to be the brag of a vain braggart,



the words having mingled into the air as soon as they were uttered. The prefix *lām* which is used to emphasize so that it serves the purpose of an oath and the suffix *nūn* which is used to denote certainty, clearly show that the assurance contained in the voice is in the strongest and most emphatic words and is expressive of the highest degree of certainty. The form of the words is, therefore, itself the clearest evidence that the voice was neither a freak or fancy of the child nor the outcome of any foresight on his part. It gives him an information about which not the slightest doubt lingers, that the time was surely coming, and no power in the world could avert it, when he would occupy a dignified position and his brothers would be brought low before his eyes. There is not any reason for the supposition that this voice was the outcome of the imagination or foresight of the child. Later events have, on the other hand, shown us that this voice which fell into the ear of that young and weak child, came from the powerful Being who has perfect control and full power to direct the management of the world as he like. We have, therefore, to see how the all-powerful Author of this voice managed to bring about the fulfilment of these words by arranging a particular course of events according to His will. The real object was to bring upon this forsaken and helpless child a time when he being seated on the throne of glory and wearing the crown of dignity over his head, should have his enemies standing before him as servants or slaves. The changes and revolutions in the course of events that were brought about to fulfil this grand object, give us to understand with clearness and certainty that all this was effected by the all-knowing and all-powerful Being who at every moment and under all circumstances has full power to order the management of affairs according to His mighty will and intention. The family to which this innocent child and his ill-natured brothers belonged, lived in the land of Canaan and did not possess any worldly splendour or dignity. But the prophecy indicated that he should rise to some great temporal dignity and hold in his hand some mighty sway. This object could not be brought about in Canaan and there was only one country which having relations with the land of Canaan was suited for the fulfilment of the prophecy. This was Egypt and only there it was possible that he



should rise to a high temporal dignity such as was necessary for the fulfilment of the prophecy. For the attainment of this object, all the events are focussed at a particular centre which makes its fulfilment possible. An Egyptian caravan while returning from a distant journey, halts near the well where the young child has been thrown a few hours before and where he lies quite helpless. One of the caravan goes out in search of water and comes upon the well. But instead of water he finds to his great astonishment a beautiful child and exclaims in joy "Good news, this is a handsome youth." The caravan takes the boy to Egypt where after many turns of life and changes of fortune, he is raised to the highest dignity under the Egyptian government. On the other hand, a great famine overtakes the land of Canaan which compels the Canaanites to resort to Egypt for sustenance. Though Egypt was in those days a great mart of corn for the neighbouring countries, yet the sons of Israel, brought up as they were in great delicacy, were hardly ever obliged to have recourse to this emporium. Compelled by circumstances, however, they took leave of their father and went to Egypt to buy corn. But Divine wisdom had ordained that another object should be brought to fulfilment by this journey of which they had not the slightest idea. On reaching their destination they are brought as suppliants into the presence of one who knows them, but whom they do not recognise. It was indeed a most sublime scene when the once destitute and helpless child thrown into the bottom of a well, but the then Prime Minister of Egypt, Joseph, son of Jacob, disclosed to the then supplicants before him, but the once proud and rash enemies, the astounding news contained in the following words: "Yes, I am Joseph, and this (referring to his real younger brother) is my brother. Verily God has been gracious to us and has raised me to this dignity out of His kindness; for it is His established law that He does not destroy the reward of the righteous and the patient."

There is another point of view also from which all these events must be looked at. When a man has in view the attainment of an object, he devises plans and resorts to means which are sure to lead to it. He considers the causes which can produce the desired effect, and has recourse to the necessary means, but notwith-



standing all his exertions and efforts, he is sometimes altogether disappointed. In the case of Joseph, his brothers used the necessary means to bring about his death, and ordinarily the measures taken for the destruction of an opponent do not materially differ from the plan adopted by Joseph's brothers and such measures are generally attended with success. It is therefore, a matter of grave consideration what the cause was which led to the bafflement of the plans of eleven experienced men against a helpless boy. It may be said that other instances of this may be cited, but the uniqueness of this event lies in the prophecy put into the mouth of that boy, that his enemies' designs against his life would all be frustrated, and in its subsequent fulfilment exactly in the manner foretold, the events so foretold being such as were beyond the power of the most scrutinizing guess, the most perfect understanding, the deepest insight and the wisest experience of man. In fact the most wonderful event in the whole story, and the plainest proof of the existence of God, is how a plan was formed by the children of this earth in which they apparently seemed, to have succeeded, and how according to the word of a helpless and weak child, all their designs were brought to nought and they were made to fail hopelessly in the attainment of their object, though it seemed to be the easiest task.

But the story of Joseph is not related in the Holy Quran simply as a narrative of past events. It is there related as a prophecy, not only a prophecy in the mouth of Joseph, but a prophecy also in the mouth of the Holy Prophet to whom this story was revealed. The object of the narration of the story of Joseph in the Holy Quran, as is also the case with the stories of other prophets in the Holy Book, is to show that the recipient of the Holy Quran would pass through all the trials through which Joseph passed and his end would also like that of Joseph be a prosperous one. The story was revealed to the Holy Prophet, in other words the Holy Prophet, prophesied the similarity of the events of his life to those of Joseph's, at a time when he was like the child Joseph thrown into the blind well of indescribable tortures and unspeakable cruelties, and when no earthly means were left in his



hands to come out of that well. On the other hand, his enemies were far more powerful and had far greater resources to draw upon, than the enemies of Joseph. But mark the sublimity and grandeur of the words in which he foretold of his ultimate success to his powerful opponents: "In the story of Joseph and his brothers, there are signs for those who question as to the events of the future life of the Holy Prophet." The proof of the fulfilment of this prophecy, contained in the story of Joseph with regard to the ultimate triumph and success of the Holy Prophet, is an easy task, for the events of the life of this mighty prophet are placed before us with a clearness which we do not meet with in the life of any other prophet, and therefore we need not more than refer to the plans adopted by his opponents for his destruction. At Mecca he suffered for thirteen long years the cruel persecutions and tortures of his enemies with a fortitude and perseverance which is truly unparalleled in the history of the world. An ordinary man would certainly have perished under these oppressions in the very commencement. No stone was left unturned to bring destruction upon his head, and he was obliged to fly at last, helpless and destitute, to a distant city. But so bent were the enemies to extirpate him that they attacked him over and over again even in his new abode. At last they contrived to unite with them the most prosperous, powerful and influential part of the population of Medina, *i. e.*, the Israelites who were living there, and thus with their combined efforts did all that lay in their power to bring him to naught. In short, all possible means which the united energy and power of all the tribes of Arabia could devise, were resorted to for the destruction of one apparently helpless man, but as he had beforehand said and challenged his opponents, he came out at last triumphant and successful against his numerous foes, and so great was his triumph that there is no instance of it in the whole history of the world. The person who being subjected to the unspeakable cruelties of his opponents fled one dark night from Mecca with but a single companion, and traversed the dreary deserts of Arabia, avoiding all frequented roads and beaten paths, reaching Medina after several days of extreme suffering,—this very person who for a time was taken to have been utterly annihilated, after several years made his



entry with ten thousand faithful companions ready to sacrifice their lives for his sake again into Mecca, that very land which one day rung with cheers at his flight. He is now master of all their land properties, and most of all lord of their holy temple. He stands in the door of their temple and orders all their idols to be broken, their gods to be brought to naught, in which they placed their trust and which they regarded as having control over the affairs of the world. Before him stand all the chiefs and the great men of the Quresh in as humble a position as stood the suppliant sons of Israel before Joseph. By usage, law and reason they all deserved to be murdered and they felt that the sentence of death could with justice be passed upon them and that they had no right to claim forgiveness. The victor accordingly asked them what treatment they expected from him under the circumstances. They answered: "Thou art noble-minded and noble-born, we, therefore, crave thy mercy and hope thou wilt treat us with generosity." He gives them the very answer which Joseph gave his brethren, thus showing that the whole of the story of Joseph was in fact a prophecy of the events of his own life, saying "No blame be on you this day. God will forgive you, for He is the most merciful of all."

We earnestly ask every seeker after truth to consider the circumstances under which such grand and mighty prophecies are uttered and then look at their fulfilment, and he will need no other proof that they are from an all-knowing, all-wise and all-powerful God, and serve as a clear and conclusive evidence of His existence. It is with this very object that the story of the great leader of the Israelites, the prophet Moses, is related in the Holy Quran. He stands before the throne of the proud Pharaoh of Egypt, and notwithstanding his utter helplessness and weakness, gives utterance with undaunted courage to the prophetic words: "We have brought to thee a sign of our truth from thy Lord that safety will attend him who follows the truth and destruction will overtake the other party." We should here see which of the two parties, Moses and Pharaoh, had the means to destroy the other. No foresight could at that time lead one to the



conclusion that weaker party would get the upper hand, and that such a helpless man as Moses would be able to destroy the mighty monarch of Egypt with his numerous hosts. Yet this was exactly what Moses told Pharaoh standing in his presence. Such an assertion under circumstances like these is the clearest proof that it was not from a weak mortal whose life at that time was only at the mercy of his adversary, but from a Power far more powerful than the mightiest ruler and having perfect control over every particle of the universe. Nor it can be easily seen, had the utterer of these words at the time of their utterance, the faintest knowledge or the slightest idea as to the manner in which he would be made victorious, or as to the causes which would bring about his opponent's destruction. But every thing was so managed by Almighty God as to bring about a fulfilment of the word of prophecy. The weaker party was saved and the stronger brought to naught in such a wonderful manner, that neither of them ever had conceived of it, nor was it within the power of either of them. Some time passed away and the Israelites could see no way of being freed from the slavery of the tyrant. At last, Moses with his followers fled from the land of Egypt. They experience no hindrance at first but a mighty barrier is soon seen which they cannot pass, nor have they the means to remove it. A stormy sea is before them and there is no bridge nor have they got boats. The fugitives stand aghast at this scene when to their complete bewilderment, they discover all of a sudden Pharaoh with his troops in their pursuit. They are now utterly disappointed and say in despair to their deliverer : " Moses, we are now in the hands of our enemies and there is no way of escape left." But Moses, that mighty man, says to his followers with the same undaunted courage as he had shown before Pharaoh, " No, this can never be, for of a certainty my Lord is with me and He will certainly show me the way to success and deliverance." It can be easily seen that so far as circumstances could point to any conclusion, the followers of Moses were in the right. What authority had Moses then to say that they shall be saved and that he will never be destroyed ? Certainly the words uttered by him on this occasion, could not proceed from his human knowledge or his own power,



but they were the words of the powerful Beng whose knowledge extends to all and whose mighty hand controls every particle of the universe with perfect freedom.

In short, the clearest and strongest proof of the existence of God is contained in powerful prophecies revealing deep secrets of the future, and every other sort of proof is inferior to it. Of all miracles, the Holy Quran, therefore, gives prominence to prophecy as the ever-living sign which can stand the test of all scientific and materialistic investigations, and offers it as a proof of the existence of God and of the truth of the Holy Prophet. This scientific miracle is the chief excellence of the Holy Quran whose assertions and arguments it ever keeps alive and the tree of whose blessings it ever keeps fruitful. As the Holy Book claims to be a blessed book, *i. e.*, one whose blessings are never intercepted, Almighty God has given it this excellence over all other books that claim a heavenly origin that the signs, prophecies and Divine revelations which it claims as evidence of its truth, are granted to its true followers in all ages. Thus all ages have witnessed the manifestations of these signs according to the need of the time.

### MIRACLES OF THE HOLY QURAN.

No other book which claims a divine origin affords the proof of matters in which it requires a belief, in the plain and simple manner in which the Holy Quran does it. From the birth of Islam to the present time, every age has witnessed the truth of this assertion. Whatever may be said of miracles in general, it cannot be denied that knowledge of the future does not belong to man, and that a prophetic utterance which reveals the deep secrets of the future, which no amount of human foresight can discover, must be regarded as a direct communication from a Higher Power, a Being who has a comprehensive knowledge of the whole future and an entire control over the affairs of this world. In fact, a clearly proved prophecy is the strongest proof of Divine existence. Now of all the miracles the Holy Quran brings prophecy to the front, and teems with prophecies from beginning to end. The very first words which were revealed to the Holy Prophet disclosed a grand prophecy relating to his future greatness. Verse after verse foretold of the difficulties in



the prophet's way, of the strong opposition he had to meet with, of the evil designs of his enemies to bring him to naught and to uproot Islam, of their persecutions, of his flight from Mecca and of his ultimate success, of the frustration of the designs of his enemies, of their vanquishment by him, of his triumphant return to Mecca, of the downfall of nations before Islam, of the establishment of Mohammadan empire, of the successors to the Holy Prophet, of the prevalence of Christianity after some time, of the general spread of Islam, and of its victory over all other religions and of the end. Thus from the birth of Islam to the end of the world, the Holy Quran has foretold of all the important events which were to befall the holy religion of Islam. This subject is so vast that it requires volumes for an exhaustive treatment. But we may illustrate the assertion made above by one or two instances.

In one of the early *Suras* revealed at Mecca, when opposition raged high against the Holy Prophet, when the handful of his followers received the cruellest tortures at the hands of the nobility of Quresh, were turned out of their homes and even mercilessly butchered, when plots were formed against the life of the Holy Prophet himself, in short, when the whole of Arabia was bent upon the extirpation of Islam and there was little hope for it, in that hour of utter hopelessness and helplessness, Almighty God thus addressed the Holy Prophet: "Do the unbelievers say, 'We have a strong force and our power is great.' Very shortly all their assembled hosts shall be routed and they shall turn the back. But for this we have appointed an hour, and that hour shall be most severe and bitter for them." Let the critic assume the most hostile attitude that he can, but he cannot in any way shake the strength of this prophecy. Could it be the word of Mohammad (may peace and the blessings of God be upon him), who as a man could not entertain the slightest hope of being saved from the evil designs of numerous enemies? Could a man with forty or fifty followers tell a whole nation of sturdy warriors that he would vanquish all their assembled hosts? Can any one point out a single circumstance from which the Holy Prophet could have guessed that in any struggle between himself and the numerous hosts of Arabia, he would come off victorious



and the enemy would be put to flight ? Moreover, the words used are expressive of the highest degree of certainty. The speaker is dead certain of what he asserts. He does not say that he expects or thinks it likely, but that he knows that what he says must happen, and nothing in the world can avert it. This strength and the certitude with which these words are uttered, are far above mortal power and mortal knowledge. It is the word of one who not only knows everything that must take place in the future, but who also possesses the mighty power which can crush the sum of mortal efforts, to bring about what he wills.

We have given above only one quotation from the Holy Quran speaking of the ultimate success of the Holy Prophet. Verses to the same effect abound in the Mecca *Suras* of the Holy Quran and were revealed at a time when opposition was strongest against him. For years the circumstances seemed more and more to point to the extinction of Islam and persecution grew severer. The small band of Muslims received the most exquisite tortures at the hands of their enemies and were twice expelled from their homes to take shelter in foreign lands. The Holy Prophet with a single companion at last remained alone in Mecca, and a plot was at that critical moment again made to put an end to his life. But the promise of God was to be fulfilled, and a year afterwards the field of Badr became the scene of a struggle between the two parties, about three hundred men, mostly raw young men undisciplined in war, and without any weapons, on the side of the Muslims, and a force of about 1,000 experienced and brave warriors on the side of the Quresh. This was the promised field where the Muslims had to fight against such odds but where a certain victory was promised to them. Here the Meccan hosts were utterly crushed and their leading men fell in the field of battle. In this wonderful manner was this prophecy brought to fulfilment. In the whole range of prophetic literature before the time of our Holy Prophet, it is impossible to find a single prophecy so sublime and so definite and yet so clearly fulfilled.

Here we have given only one of the numerous prophecies which gave the Holy Prophet the glad tidings



of his triumph and victory at a time when he and his followers were suffering the severest persecution at the hands of their enemies. In fact, every event of importance in his life is the subject of a prophecy. Thus in connection with the well-known flight to Medina, the Holy Quran had long before said, while the Holy Prophet was yet at Mecca: " Verily He who has revealed to thee the Holy Quran and made compliance with its injunctions obligatory upon thee, the same Omnipotent and Omniscient Being will bring thee back to thy home after thou hast been turned out therefrom, (xxviii, 85) " The word used here comes from the root which means the sending back of a thing to a position which it has lost, and hence it involves the idea firstly of the Holy Prophet's being turned out from Mecca, and secondly of his coming back to it. Thus this verse was a clear prophecy of the Holy Prophet's flight and his triumphant re-entry into Mecca. It should be borne in mind that the *Sura* in which this verse occurs, is a Mecca *Sura*, and accordingly it was revealed long before the Flight, thus foretelling both that great historical event and the still greater one of his coming back to the city which had turned him out, as a conqueror. Little did the Meccans know at the time when he was compelled to fly and to hide himself in a cavern that he would come back as their ruler, but he had said so, and because it was the word of God and not that of a mortal, it was fulfilled to the very letter. Nor were the unbelievers of Mecca unaware of all these prophetic utterances, but they only laughed him to scorn at first because they could not conceive the idea that the Holy Prophet, helpless and rejected as he was, could ever vanquish their numerous hosts. But when they ultimately saw that every word was fulfilled as it had been uttered years before, when none could have thought of it, they saw the hand of God working too manifestly in support of the Holy Prophet, and with his glorious entry into Mecca, in accordance with the prophecy which had long before been communicated to them, they all at once bowed in submission before the Holy Prophet as the true messenger of the Being whose existence they now felt too palpably to deny Him any more.



There are also prophecies in the Holy Quran concerning the succession of the companions of the Holy Prophet, but this is not the proper place to dwell upon them. We are told how the very life of Islam would be threatened after the death of the Holy Prophet, and how God would change the fear into security and established the faith with a powerful hand and raise, out of the faithful, successors to the Holy Prophet. All this was brought to fulfilment. It is interesting to note in this connection that as the Holy Prophet promised thrones to his companions, so did Jesus give a promise of twelve thrones for the twelve apostles to sit on in this world. But whereas the former promise was fulfilled within a very short time, the latter remains unfulfilled to this day. The fulfilment of every promise that God had given to the companions of the Holy Prophet was clearly witnessed by them in their own life-time, and hence their faith in God had reached the highest degree of certainty. They saw that whatever had been promised to them in this world, was realized by them, and accordingly they knew with certainty that the Divine promises concerning the life after death were also true. Thus was their faith in God strengthened so as to be free from every doubt and imperfection.

The above few remarks were necessary to enable us to review a pamphlet by Mr. Mohammad Abdul Hasan Siddiqi, Registrar, High Court, Hyderabad (Deccan). This pamphlet is named "Miracle of the Holy Quran," and the edition under review is an English translation of an Urdu original by the author himself. The pamphlet calls attention chiefly to the prophetic in the Holy Quran which subject is dealt with in the second, third, fourth and fifth articles. There is no doubt that the author has displayed great ingenuity in pointing out prediction concerning the end, the first four caliphs, the caliphs of the race of Marwan and the sovereigns of the Abbaside dynasty. But we do not agree with him in his conjectures. The interpretation he gives to the words of the Holy Quran is too far-fetched, and by his mode of interpretation anything may be made to mean any thing. For instance, quoting the first few verse of the Holy Quran, he holds that the words "the pious (or God-fearing) refer to the Prophet



himself"; "those who believe in the unseen" to the first caliph, Abubakr; "who establish prayer," to the second caliph; "who expend out of what we have bestowed on them," to Othman; "and those who believe in what has been sent down to thee, as well as what was sent down before thee," to Ali, the fourth caliph; and "they have firm faith in the life to come," to Hasan, son of Ali. In a like manner the author deals with certain verses of the chapter entitled the *Shura* (Counsel). The words "verily the blame attaches to those who wrong men and act insolently on the earth in disregard of justice," are asserted to be a prophecy concerning Muawiah, and "verily the losers are those who have ruined themselves and their families on the day of judgment," concerning sovereigns of the race of Marwan, and the following verses of a similar nature concerning sovereigns of the Abbaside dynasty.

In our opinion this is playing with the words of the Holy Quran. This is the mode of interpretation generally adopted by the Christians to prove the divinity of Jesus, and a similar mode of giving an unnatural interpretation to the words of the Holy Quran is adopted by the Shias. We ask, what is the aim of prophecy? The object of a prophecy is that those who have witnessed its fulfilment should have their faith in the mighty power and comprehensive knowledge of the Divine Being strengthened. But the words quoted above even if they were prophetic were never understood to be so at the time of their fulfilment, and now more than a thousand years afterwards it occurs to Mr. Abul Hasan that they contain such and such prophecies. He has, moreover, condemned some righteous men. Because there is a verse in the Holy Quran which speaks of the punishment of the unjust, therefore it must refer to Muawiah! Is he certain that Muawiah was unjust? It is too bold an assertion for a God-fearing Muslim. Is he, again, sure that all the sovereigns of the race of Marwan and Abbas were wicked and doomed to hell? Such views cannot disseminate true knowledge among the Muslims. Mr. Abul Hasan tells us that prophecies are always ambiguous and indefinite. This is not true. We have given above one or two instances of the Quranic prophecies and the reader can see how clear and definite they are. Similarly this age



itself is witnessing the fulfilment of some of the clearest prophecies of the Holy Quran. We think it is time that Mohammadans should understand their duty to the Holy Quran.

### RELIEF IN MIRACLES AS REQUIRED BY THE HOLY QURAN.

Of all the great religious systems of the world, Islam alone enjoys the distinction of being an historic religion, while its founder, the Holy Ppophet Mohamad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, occupies pre-eminently an historic position among the eminent teachers of mankind. Even if no value is attached to the doubts entertained by some modern critics as to the very existence of some of the great personages who are looked upon as the founders of great religions, this much cannot be denied that with the exception of our Holy Prophet, myth and history, fiction and fact, are inseparably mixed in the lives of the founders of all the religions which have influenced, or are influencing, a considerable portion of mankind. This we do not state simply as an empty peculiarity. On the other hand, we see that every important event and particular of the Holy Prophet's life is placed before us with all the clearness in the light of history. All that is necessary we know of him, and nothing that was of importance in his life, is hidden from our eyes. Thus knowing him fully, the critic is in a position to study him in the light of history and to judge his words and deeds critically. But not so with the founders of other religions, who can be seen only dimly through the gloom of fiction and mythology which has gathered round their names. Their teachings, their miracles, their words and their deeds, are all tinged with myth and dubiety. But in the case of our Holy Prophet, there is all the evidence in these matters which is necessary to place them on a sound historical basis.

On the other hand, the pains taken by Mohamadan writers in ascertaining the true facts of the Holy Prophet's life and in sifting the traditional lore, is also unequalled. We can hardly conceive the difficulties which they had to encounter and the immense labour they had to spend, in arriving at a definite conclusion as to the authenticity of every single report which was transmitted orally. This careful and



minute scrutiny has to very great extent purified the collection of traditions of the element of fabrication, and thus separating truth from falsehood places before the critic a trustworthy information. That there may be errors still in the mass of traditions in spite of the researching enquiries made, we do not deny, but such error does not in any way affect their reliability. For, it must be admitted that slight variations in narratives of the same event are far from being an evidence of its non-occurrence. If such were the case we would have to reject every historical event. Even in this age when printing presses, post offices and telegraphs have facilitated the task of correctly recording every event as it takes place, such variations cannot be avoided. In short, traditions cannot be divested of their authority and the historical value they possess, by the mere consideration that even the minute scrutiny of early collectors may not have freed them from every error, while their authenticity can be further tested by the consideration that no authentic tradition can contradict the Holy Quran.

By drawing the reader's attention to the value of traditions, our object is to show that though the Holy Quran affords the clearest proof of the miracles of our Holy Prophet, yet even those miracles which are narrated in the traditions, whose authenticity has been established, cannot be ignored, for they were not accepted as true until the minutest possible scrutiny had been made as to their truth. The acceptance of Jesus' miracles by the Christians stands on quite a different basis. The manner in which they accepted certain narratives of the doings and sayings of Jesus, simply excites laughter. Nothing was done to test the truth of this or that narrative; in fact not much could have been done at so late a date. Books admitted in the canon were determined by an utterly arbitrary choice as they most appealed to fancy and not because the occurrences recorded in them were found to be historically true, while the rejection of others as false and spurious was not due to the fact that the events recorded in them were ascertained to be false. This was done after three hundred years when even an enquiry could not have done much benefit. Now under these circumstances, an impartial critic cannot accept the miracles of Jesus only



upon the authority of books which are themselves of a doubtful origin, as the Gospels undoubtedly are. The evidence of the Gospels must, therefore, be backed up by other and more reliable testimony. The record of the Holy Prophet's miracles, on the other hand, is of the nature of a history, for not a word of it was allowed to claim an authority unless complete enquiry had been made as to its truth. Moreover the enquiry in this case commenced very soon after the Holy Prophet at a time when the truth of those events could be easily ascertained. Thus the miracles recorded in the traditions possess the clearest proof of their truth and do not need any other evidence. Our object in this article is however to show that apart from traditions, the Holy Quran also whose authority as a true record is quite unassailable, requires us to believe in the miracles of the Holy Prophet and affords the clearest evidence of their truth.

It should be noted in the first place that every verse of the Holy Quran was at its revelation circulated among the friends and foes of Islam in a manner which is without a parallel in history. Every word of it was, at the time of its revelation, recited by the Holy Prophet in assemblies containing his friends as well as foes, and thus it got full publicity. For men who, in declaring themselves to be the followers of the Holy Prophet, had to cut off all connections and undergo the hardest trials and persecutions, the Word of God which was revealed to their beloved Master from time to time, was as the food upon which their spirits fed, and it was imprinted upon the tablets of their hearts which were ever ready to receive it in such a manner that they could never forget it. This was the reason that there was not a single companion of the Holy Prophet who had not some portion of the Holy Quran by heart, while many of them knew the whole of it. Amid all the hard trials and persecutions which they had to suffer, it was the only thing which brought them solace and satisfaction, and accordingly they ran to drink of the fountain of revelation with the swiftness and eagerness of a traveller, who being parched with thirst suddenly sees in a desert a spring of water. So great was their eagerness that those among them who were obliged to remain apart from the company of



the Holy Prophet for the transaction of their affairs had made arrangements by which every two of them could alternately live in the company of the Holy Prophet, and thus they kept themselves daily informed of the Divine revelations. In short, every verse of the Holy Quran gained full publicity with its revelation. Moreover, the new mission spent all its efforts for the conversion of the unbelievers and thus the new portions received by the Holy Prophet daily were recited to the unbelievers as they were invited to accept the religion of Unity. Every follower of the Holy Prophet deemed it his first duty to convey to others, believers or unbelievers, whatever he heard from the Holy Prophet. The Holy Quran further contained the challenge that being of Divine origin the like of it could not be produced by sum of mortal efforts, and in such a case it cannot be supposed that those to whom the challenge was given were kept ignorant of the very thing the like of which they were asked to make. In addition to all these facts, the recital of the Holy Quran was obligatory in the five daily prayers, and when the Imam read it aloud to his audience, the unbelievers could not have remained ignorant of it. Had the opponents of Islam reflected over a single circumstance, *viz.*, how boldly and openly Islam presented in the public all that it had to say, they would not have doubted its truth. It did not keep anything hidden or concealed, but announced in a loud voice its doctrines, beliefs and revelations. It laid open its property before the eyes of men so that they might examine it critically and accept it after they had found it faultless. It taught no unapproachable mystery, concealed nothing and kept nothing in the dark. What a contrast when we read, on the one hand, the story of a man now made a God who when he had told his chosen disciples that he was the Messiah at once gave them the strict orders that they should not give the matter out, and see, on the other, a man claiming to be a prophet who announces in a loud voice and clear accents, not only his claim to this heavenly office, but also every word of what he believes to have come down to him from God, thus showing that he was fully conscious and knew with certainty that what he said was true, and what he



offered was truth, and that the critical eye of a searcher after truth could not find any fault in it. In fine, the publicity which every verse of the Holy Quran obtained among the friends and foes of Islam, at the time of its revelation, is the most conclusive proof that while its followers knew every word of it to be certainly true, even its opponents had no objection to the facts recorded in it.

Now the Holy Quran states in clear words the working of miracles by the Holy Prophet, and on this very ground charges the unbelievers with having rejected what was proved to them by arguments and signs to be true. It should be borne in mind that the Holy Quran does not use the word *Mujiza* (miracle) anywhere. To denote the supernatural occurrences which cannot be brought about by the power of a mortal, it uses the word *Ayát* meaning signs, or *Bey-yenát* or *ayat-i-bayyenat* meaning arguments or clear and manifest arguments, because they are signs of the existence of God and of the truth of the Holy Prophet, and manifest arguments the truth of which cannot be questioned. As the existence of God is hidden from the eyes of men, the ordinary occurrences which one witnesses daily cannot serve as arguments for His existence. It is for this purpose that extraordinary occurrences beyond mortal power are manifested at the hands of prophets and these are called signs. From the Holy Quran it appears clearly that our Holy Prophet showed many such signs to the unbelievers of Mecca, but they called them sorcery and treated the Holy Prophet as a liar and laughed him to scorn, and demanded new signs. The following verses of the Holy Quran establish the truth of this statement: "And when a sign comes to them, they say, 'we will by no means believe till what has been accorded to the apostles of God is accorded to ourselves,'" (vi: 125). This verse shows clearly that signs were shown to the unbelievers, but instead of accepting the Holy Prophet they said that they would not believe until the powers of working miracles which had been granted to the prophets of God were also granted to them. Again the Holy Quran says: "Now have proofs that may be seen, (*i. e.*, clear signs, come to you from your Lord: whose sees them, the advantage will be his



own : and whoso is blind to them, his own will be the loss" (vi: 105). In the beginning of the chapter, entitled the *Moon*, it says: "And when the unbelievers see a sign, they turn aside and say, 'This is magic continuing in a regular course'" (liv: 2). In calling the sign of the Holy Prophet shown Mustamir the unbelievers mean to say that as the former prophets showed signs which were really sorcery, so the signs of the Holy Prophet were also a kind of magic. Mark also the verses: "And when they are warned, no warning do they take; and when they see a sign, they fall to mocking, and say: 'Lo, this is no other than clear sorcery'" (xxxvii: 13-15). Here again there is a clear statement that miracles were shown, but the unbelievers only mocked and called them a sorcery. On another occasion, the Holy Quran says: "How shall God guide a people who, after they had believed and borne witness that the Apostle was true, and after that clear proofs of his mission had reached them, disbelieved?" (iii: 85). And again: "Moreover, clear signs have We sent down to thee, and none will disbelieve them but the perverse." ii: 99).

All these verses show conclusively that the unbelievers saw miracles worked by the Holy Prophet, but they called the miracles a sorcery and mocked the Holy Prophet and called him a liar. It is the height of absurdity to say in the face of these clear statements that the Holy Quran denies the working of miracles by the Holy Prophet. It is true that the Holy Quran does not detail these miracles but of that there was no need. These details are fully contained in authentic traditions and nearly three thousand miracles of the Holy Prophet are proved by the testimony of the companions. Similarly there are hundreds of prophecies recorded in the books on traditions which were fulfilled in their time. Two objections need however to be particularly discussed. The first is based on some verses of the chapter entitled the *Spider*, v. 50-53. Those who consider these verses as an authority for the denial of miracles are mistaken. They do not read all these verses together, but read the first portion and omit the latter. But even the first portion of the first verse read alone does not prove that signs were not shown. It only says: "And the unbelievers say, 'why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord.'" When



the Holy Quran repeatedly blames the unbelievers for their rejection of it, in spite of their having seen signs, as we have shown above, and calls them unjust, perverse and unbelieving for their persistent denial, it is not reasonable to take this verse as meaning that the unbelievers denied that any sign had ever been shown. The only inference to which these words read alone would lead, would be in this case that they treated the signs which had already been shown as naught, as we have already seen that they called them sorcery and magic, and demanded fresh signs which should convince them of their truth. [But the context clearly shows that the unbelievers did not deny generally the miracles of our Holy Prophet and that they demanded a particular sign, and it is of this sign that the verses quoted above speak. Reading the chapter containing these verses from the beginning, it is quite clear that Almighty God warned the opponents of the Holy Prophet to take a lesson from the fate of those who opposed and persecuted the prophets of God before them, and with this object told them that when they persisted in denying the miracles of the prophets of God, destruction was brought upon them. Thus it speaks separately of the punishment brought down by heaven's wrath upon the people of Noah, Lot and Shuaib, and upon Ad, Samood, Korah, Pharaoh and Haman, and then sums up thus : "Every one of them We destroyed because of his sins : against some of them did We send a furious wind, some of them were taken by a terrible cry, some of them were sunk into earth, and some of them were drowned. And it was not God who dealt with them unjustly, but they dealt unjustly with their own souls. . . . . And these instances, We cite for these people" (xxix : 40, 43). Thus were the unbelievers told repeatedly that punishment would come down upon them on account of their rejection of the heavenly signs shown by the Holy Prophet as it had come down upon those who formerly rejected the signs of the prophets who were sent to them. The words "Why is not a sign sent down" are really a reply to this warning and have been quoted as such in the Holy Quran. The unbelievers meant to say why was not the threat of punishment executed. Similar requests of the unbelievers are contained elsewhere in the Holy



Quran as in the following verse : "And when the unbelievers played saying, 'O God! if this religion is the true one, and if the signs which are shown in its support, are from Thee, rain down stones upon us from heaven or lay on us some grievous chastisement for rejecting these.'" Such thoughts arose in the minds of the unbelievers when the Holy Quran blaming them for their rejection of the signs of God threatened them with punishment. The fulfilment of these threatenings is thus spoken of in the Holy Quran in the following verse : "Their state is like that of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them, who believed not in the signs of God, therefore, God seized upon them in their sin"; and again, "Their state is like that of the people of Pharaoh, and of those before them who treated their Lord's signs as lies. We, therefore, destroyed them in their sins, and We drowned the people of Pharaoh." (viii 52, 54).

In short, the question of the unbelievers in the verses quoted above, related to the threatend punishment. This is clear, as shown above, from a consideration of the verses preceding the one under discussion. The verses following it lead us to the same conclusion. They may be translated as below : "They say, 'Why are not signs sent down to him?' Say, the signs which you demand (*i.e.*, the signs of punishment) are certainly in the power of God, and what am I but an open warner of this very punishment. Is it not enough for those who demand the sign of punishment that We have sent down to thee (in spite of thy being an *ummi*, *i.e.*, unacquainted with letters) the Book to be recited to them? In this verily is a mercy a remembrance for those who believe. And they challenge thee to hasten the punishment (and take no advantage of the signs of mercy which have been manifested for them. Had there not been an hour fixed for it, that punishment had already come upon them. But overtake them it will most surely, suddenly and when they look not for it." (xxix: 50, 53). The last verse throws light upon the meaning of the first, and explains, the word 'signs' occurring there as meaning not ordinary signs, but the signs of punishment, which they challenged the Prophet to hasten. And what it is most important to bear in mind is that signs



are not denied here. On the other hand, it is plainly asserted that the sign demanded would be surely sent at the appointed time. The words "had there not been an hour fixed for it," refer to the prophecies in which it had been said, as stated elsewhere in the Holy Quran, that punishment would not be sent down upon the Meccans so long as the Holy Prophet lived among them, and that it would be sent after the passing away of one year from the time that the Holy Prophet left Mecca, prophecies which were brought to fulfilment at the exact hour in the field of Badr and subsequent battles.

In these verse Almighty God further exhorts the unbelievers to refrain from demanding a sign of punishment when they were made to witness the signs of the mercy of God which could show them the truth of the existence of God and of the mission of the Holy Prophet. The object which they had in view in demanding a sign of punishment could also be attained by a sign of mercy. What they wanted was to realise the certainty of the truth of the Holy Prophet's mission, and this object, they thought, could not be effected merely by signs which they could witness, for there was the possibility in that case, they argued, that they might be deceived. This is clear from their calling these signs a sorcery. Hence they desired that punishment should overtake them so that realising the punishment they might also realise the truth of the Prophet's mission. But Almighty God told them that their perplexity and doubts could be removed in another manner. All that they desired was a sign of which they might not only be the observers, but the effect of which should be clearly witnessed in themselves. For this, they were told, the sign of punishment was not necessary, for the same object could be fulfilled by a sign of mercy, by the Holy Quran which was dazzling their eyes with its splendour and the brilliance of the powerful light it cast upon them, showing its inherent excellences, truths and beauties and its supernatural characteristics in such a wonderful manner as to baffle them altogether, casting a supernatural and wholesome influence upon the people, bringing about wonderful transformations in those hearts which had given it reception, bringing to life dead of ages, resorting sight to the born blind,



healing various sorts of the diseases of unbelief and scepticism, cleansing the lepers who were seriously affected with bigotry, bringing light and dispelling darkness and last of all bringing about man's union with God.

If any one were to consider these verses, being freed from prejudice, he would at once see that there is no denial of miracles in them. They declare with a loud voice that the unbelievers demanded the sign of punishment with which they had been aforetime threatened. They were told in the first place that the sign of punishment would bring about their destruction while the object they wanted to attain could be attained by the sign of mercy, *i. e.*, the Holy Quran, which could give them life and save them from the destruction into which they were leading themselves by their own demands. But said the Holy Quran, if they were not satisfied with this, then the sign of punishment would also be sent and that it would surely overtake them when the appointed hour came. Thus the promise of the sign of punishment is confirmed in these verses after drawing attention to the signs of mercy which were contained in the Holy Quran. It is nothing but ignorance of the Holy Quran on the part of those who pretend to deduce from these verses a denial of signs. The vanquished idolators of Mecca could not deny the miracles of the Holy Prophet, for not only did they afterwards accept all the signs of which he had shown by accepting the truth of his mission and becoming Muslims, but even in the days of their opposition to him they could not totally deny the existence of such signs and wonderingly described them as magic in other countries. Thus they confessed their manifestation at the hands of the Holy Prophet though giving them another name. These confessions of theirs are also found in the Holy Quran. Had they been absolute deniers of the miracles of the Holy Prophet, they could not have attained to such certainty after their acceptance of Islam as they showed in spilling their blood and sacrificing their lives for the sake of the Holy Prophet. At the height of their opposition they called the Holy Prophet a *Sâhir* (sorcerer) as is evident from the verse: "And the unbelievers say, 'This is a sorcerer, a liar'" (xxxviii: 1). It is clear therefore that they saw certain signs but as they thought the Holy



Prophet to be a liar, they did not attribute them to his miraculous power, but considered them to have been shown by sorcery. But later on they saw their own errors and acknowledged with a sincere heart that the signs shown them were heavenly signs. The whole peninsula of Arabia by its acceptance of Islam thus become a witness to the mighty miracles of our Holy Prophet. The Meccans never conceived the idea of totally denying the manifestation of such deeds at the hands of the Holy Prophet as could not be effected by mortal power alone. All the circumstances point clearly to the fact that wherever the Holy Quran speaks of the Meccans, as denying that signs were shown them, such signs of punishment only are meant as were demanded by them before punishment was brought down upon them.

Another verse of the Holy Quran which is construed into a denial of miracles, occurs in the chapter entitled the "Israelites." For an insight into the meaning of this verse, it is necessary to quote it along with the preceding and subsequent verses. Read together, these verses run as follows: "It is a sign of Our wrath that there is not a village which, before the day of judgment, We will not either destroy or chastise with a grievous punishment. So it has been written in the Book. But we do not send some of the (past) signs (of our wrath), because they were called lies by the past generations. Thus We had given to Samood a she-camel (as a precursor of the punishment which was to come upon them) by which they could see the truth, but they maltreated her. And We do not send the signs of wrath, but to strike terror (and hence We do not send back the signs of wrath which former people called a lie and by which they were not inspired with awe)" (xvii : 58, 59).

Before discussing the meaning of these verses, it is necessary to point out that the signs which are manifested by God at the hands of a prophet, are of two kinds, *viz.*, signs of terror and chastisement, and signs of rejoicing and satisfaction, in other words, the signs of Divine wrath and the signs of Divine mercy. The signs of wrath are manifested for the pervers and hard-hearted and refractory people, so that they may strike the awe of Divine glory and majesty into their hearts,



The signs of mercy are displayed for the faithful and the earnest seekers after truth who sincerely desire that their faith may be strengthened, and that they may attain to perfect certainty, and who show meekness and humbleness of heart. They are not meant to inspire awe or strike terror into hearts, for they are manifested for those who have already bowed with true submission at the Divine threshold. To such God turns in His mercy and breathes satisfaction into their souls, thus strengthening their faith and increasing their certainty. The faithful man witnesses these signs of mercy through the Holy Quran and advances by their means in his faith and certainty. With such signs the feebleness and waveringness of the heart is taken away and a tranquility descends upon it. And as the faithful one witnesses these signs, his life becomes a life of peace and tranquility which is not disturbed with doubts. This bliss he enjoys to the end of his days and thus he reaches the highest stage of perfection in his knowledge and certainty, advancing at the same time in his love of God, on account of the manifest and hidden blessing and favours which he receives from Almighty God. It is, therefore, through the signs of mercy that a man can attain to the goal of spiritual perfection. They have in them a grandeur, an efficacy and a blessedness which make the spiritual wayfarer attain to perfect knowledge and the highest point in the love of God which His chosen servants have reached. These signs are numerous and cannot be counted by twos and threes, for they rain in abundance upon every faithful servant of God. They are not limited to any particular age, but regarding them the Almighty has given a promise in the Holy Quran that they will always be granted to the faithful. Thus it says: "The faithful men who walk in righteousness, would be favored with signs of rejoicing in this life as well as in the next, (and through them they would go on making unbounded progress in the love and knowledge of God). This is the Word of God and it shall never pass away; and to be favored with the signs of Divine mercy is the greatest success, (i.e., it is the thing which makes a man attain to the desired place in Divine love and knowledge)" (x : 63, 64).

If now we go back to the verse in dispute, it will be at once clear that in that verse only the signs



of wrath, signs which strike terror into the heart, are spoken of, and this is evident from the latter portion of the verse which plainly says: "And the signs demanded by the unbelievers we do not send, but to strike terror." For it can be easily seen that "the signs," spoken of in the first portion of the verse, are the same as "the signs" spoken of in the latter portion. But in the latter case the word *ayát* meaning "the signs" is further qualified by the description that they are sent to strike terror and hence they belong to the first kind of signs, that is to say, they are the signs of wrath. Therefore, the signs of mercy are not spoken of in this verse at all, for as shown above the signs of mercy are not sent to strike terror. This much is, therefore, settled beyond all contention that by the signs spoken of in the verse under discussion, are meant only the signs of wrath and not all sorts of signs which Almighty God shows in support of His prophets. The next point to be called about the meaning of this verse is, what interpretation is applicable in the case. It may either mean that no sign of wrath was manifested at the hands of the Holy Prophet, or that such signs of wrath were not manifested as had been shown previously, or that only those signs of wrath were not shown, which having been shown formerly were treated as lies. Now the first two interpretations are on their very face inapplicable, for the former people had not belied all the signs of wrath which Almighty God could manifest. The power of God to manifest His signs of wrath could not be taken to be limited to the signs of wrath which had already been manifested, nor could the former people reject a sign which had not been as yet manifested. The clear interpretation of the verse is, therefore, only this that certain signs which had been sent by Almighty God in time past, and which had been rejected by former people, would not be sent back because they had already been rejected. Further than this the verse does not go and it is absurd to take it to mean a denial of all sorts of signs.

In short, the verse in dispute while denying the manifestation of a certain class of signs, upholds the view that signs were manifested in other forms. To send the same signs over again which had already been



charged with falsehood, would have been a weakness which could not be imputed to Almighty God. It was not at all necessary that the signs which had been shown for Moses or Noah or those which had brought about the destruction of Samood or Ad, should be again manifested against the unbelievers of Mecca. The truth of the Holy Prophet's mission did not depend upon these, and numerous signs, much grander than those shown previously, had been shown establishing his truth. Not satisfied with these the unbelievers demanded a sign of punishment and asked to be destroyed in the manner in which the former rejecters of the prophets had been destroyed. In reply to this they were told that signs would certainly be manifested, but it was not necessary that the same signs should be sent back. If we take the *al-ayat* word to mean signs generally, another difficulty would arise. For in that case the Holy Quran would seem to be countenancing the law that if once a sign was treated as a lie, then no sign whatever should be shown. If this were true, then no sooner the first sign was rejected than Almighty God ought to have discontinued the sending of further signs, which is manifestly absurd. Moreover, the Holy Quran has itself explained that the same sign was not sent to all people, but that for each a different sign was manifested. That an absolute denial even of a sign of wrath is not meant in the verse under discussion, is apparent from the following verses of the Holy Quran in which such threat has been held out to the Meccans: "And that they will bid thee to hasten the chastisement, but let them bear in mind that God will not fail His threat. Say, God is He who has power to send on you a punishment from above you, or from beneath your feet, or to bring about discord among you and to make some of you taste the violence of others. And say, praise be to God; He will show you His signs, and you shall acknowledge them. Say, (the execution of) the threat (of punishment) given to you will take place after a day (one year), which not for an hour can you retard or hasten on. And they ask thee, 'Is this true,' (*i. e.*, will the threat of punishment come to pass)? Say; Yes! by my Lord it is the very truth and you cannot frustrate His power to bring it about. We will show them Our signs in the extremities of this land, and also among themselves until it become



quite clear to them that it is the truth. I will show you my signs : desire them not then to be hastened."

It is clear from the verses quoted here that the threat of punishment had been repeatedly given to the unbelievers and it was the execution of this threat which they again and again demanded. We have moreover, shown above that the signs denied in the verse in dispute, do not include all sorts of signs, and the truth of this has been made manifest by reading which this verse, the verse which follows it. A consideration of the preceding verse leads us to the same conclusion. The preceding verse as quoted and translated above, also speaks of a sign of the wrath of heaven, *viz.*, a Divine visitation from which no village would be saved, the time of it being stated to be 'before the day of judgment.' The prophecy contained in this verse tells us that many villages would then be destroyed and many visited with severe punishment, none being left unaffected.

The Holy Quran blames the unbelievers of Mecca for their persistent denial in another manner too. It shows the falsity of their assertions by drawing attention to signs already witnessed and even admitted as true by the unbelievers, as is evident from *Al-i-Imran*, 85: "How shall God guide a people who, after they had believed and borne witness that the apostle was true, and after that clear signs of his truth has reached them, disbelieved?" Here it is clearly asserted, and the assertions of the Holy Quran are based on facts which the Meccans never denied, that the unbelievers witnessed the working of miracles by the Holy Prophet until they were convinced of his truth, but that afterwards they again denied. Of such Almighty God hardened the hearts, for they saw the light and then preferred to live in darkness. This verse may also be a reply to the demand for farther miracles on the part of unbelievers, for of what use could further miracles be to a people who had seen miracles already and even admitted their truth, but still disbelieved. Similarly in *Al-Anaam* 110, the Holy Quran says: "With their most binding oath they swear by God and say to the Muslims that if the sign (which they demanded) come to them, they will believe it. Say, all signs are with my God (who has power to show them), but what shall make



you to understand that when the demanded sign would come, they will not believe even then." And then goes on to say : " And We will turn their hearts and their eyes (so that they would not believe in the miracle when wrought) as they did not believe in the signs when shown first."

Now all these verses and others to the same effect were repeatedly rehearsed before the unbelievers, to say nothing of the Mohammadans who read them day and night. If then no miracle had actually been wrought how could the Mohammadans remain believers in a book which claimed to be a revelation from God and yet made statements false on the very face of them, because it asserted that numerous miracles had been wrought while actually not a single one had been witnessed by them or by any one else. If no sign had been shown, then the Holy Quran made statements known to be false to the followers of the Holy Prophet, and they could not have given it any credit. But they believed it to be the very truth and this with perfect certainty, so much so, that they forsook worldly comforts, pleasure and wealth for its sake, nay they forsook their nearest relatives and dearest friends and split their blood in its cause. On the other hand, if the unbelievers, had seen no sign, why did they not say so, and why did they call the Holy Prophet a sorcerer and the signs a sorcery? What were the deeds done by the Holy Prophet for which they called him a sorcerer? Does it not appear wonderful that the Holy Quran, read openly day and night in gatherings of the Mohammadans and unbelievers, declared in a loud voice that miracles had been wrought but that the unbelievers called them a sorcery, if actually neither a miracle had been wrought nor had the unbelievers called it a sorcery? And is it not still more wonderful that these very unbelievers afterwards bowed down their heads in submission before the Holy Quran and accepted it as the very Word of God? If no sign had been shown, then it is equally true that the unbelievers had not called the Holy Prophet a sorcerer. How could they then believe in the Holy Quran knowing that it contained assertions manifestly false? What! could it say that signs had been shown but that the unbelievers had rejected them as being a sorcery, whereas neither a sign had been



shown nor had they ever termed it a sorcery? It is quite a different thing that the wonderful deeds done by the Holy Prophet, which they ultimately admitted to be heavenly signs, were ascribed by them in the days of their opposition to the power of sorcery. Both these statements are consistent in this respect that they acknowledged the doing of certain deeds beyond mortal power, and hence they could believe in their truth after rejecting them. But to have seen no miracles, to have never rejected them and to have never called them a sorcery, and then confess that signs had been seen, rejected and called a sorcery, is what cannot be conceived of. Turn over the pages of the Holy Quran and take them in any light, it cannot be denied that the Holy Quran asserts the working of miracles by the Holy Prophet.

We have stated above that the signs shown by a prophet are either signs of mercy bringing good news or signs of wrath and punishment. It is for this reason that a prophet is called a *basheer*, an announcer of good news, and a *nazeer*, a warner against punishment. Now the joyful news which the prophet announces, and the punishment against which he warns men, are not limited solely to the life after death. Their effect is witnessed in this very life and thus perfect certainty is generated in the heart with regard to the promises and threats made concerning the next life. Of the two parties into which men are split at the appearance of a prophet, he conveys the glad tidings of ultimate success and prosperity beginning with this life to those who following in his footsteps walk in righteousness and show the paths of evil, and threatens with failure and destruction those who charge him with falsehood, and devise plans to extirpate him and his teachings. When both these parties realise the fulfilment of these promises and threats, they are convinced, with the highest degree of certainty, of the truth of the promises and threats made concerning the next life, and they see with clearness that the prophet did not speak as a mere mortal, but was backed by a power which must be the source of perfect knowledge and perfect power. This was the reason that when the Meccans witnessed failure after failure and saw at last in the victory of Mecca the fulfilment of the grand promise which had been made to them in the very beginning of



the prophet's career, they came to know with perfect certainty that the signs which they had ridiculed and treated as lies and sorcery, proceeded really from God, the source of mighty power and knowledge. There is no doubt that a certain degree of obscurity, however slight it may be, hangs about ordinary miracles, and perfect satisfaction and complete certainty are obtained only by the miracle the effect of which is realised by a man in his own person. In the case of the faithful servants of God, this object is effected by the signs which announce the glad tidings of the mercy and blessings of God, while in that of the transgressors, the punishment of heaven descends upon them and makes them realise the truth. This is the reason that the Holy Quran has not given details of the miracles wrought by our Holy Prophet and has laid great stress upon only one of them, *viz.*, that which related to his own ultimate triumph and victory and to the failure and vanquishment of the unbelievers. It was on the manifestation of this grand sign, the greatest miracle that has been wrought in the world, the most conclusive proof of the mighty power and knowledge of God, the most wonderful manifestation of Divine majesty and glory, that the whole of Arabia bowed down its proud head before the majesty of the truth of Islam, and that people whose stiff necks had never borne the yoke of any power, now willingly and with true joy submitted themselves to bear the yoke of Islam. Peace and the blessings of God may for ever descend on the Holy one through whom this wonderful transformation was brought about in the world.

The unbelieving Meccans used to demand three kinds of signs from the Holy Prophet. Firstly, signs involving punishment, as proposed by themselves; secondly, signs involving punishment which had already been manifested for the chastisement of previous people or as precursors of such chastisement; and thirdly, material and gross signs inconsistent with faith. As regards the first kind, many verses have already been quoted from the Holy Quran. The reply given to their demand was that punishment would be sent down upon them from heaven, or from earth, or in the form of battle between the two parties. This threat was executed by means of the battles which



the Holy Prophet had to fight. As regards the second kind, there are also many verses as has been shown above. The following verses also bear upon the same subject : "The unbelievers say among themselves : 'Will you then accept sorcery while you see it to be such. Let him (if he is true) show a sign like the signs shown by those who were sent formerly.' Before their time none of the cities which We have destroyed, believed : will these men then, believe?" Here, it will be seen, when the unbelievers demanded a sign like the signs with which former prophets were sent, the reply given to them was that in that case they would not believe, for none of those upon whom signs of destruction were sent formerly, became a believer thereby. Here Almighty God gives the reason why He did not bring down upon them a punishment like that which had been brought down upon former generations, as that would involve their utter destruction. But as He had sent the Holy Prophet as a mercy for the whole world, He did not wish to destroy his people altogether although on account of their transgressions they deserved such punishment. The chastisement sent to them was a milder one which as it brought about the destruction of the more obdurate among them, the chief of the transgressors, left a vast majority to realise the truth of Divine promises and to accept the truth. This was because the Holy Prophet was sent as a mercy, and hence Almighty God dealt mercifully with even his opponents and instead of destroying them, gave them life by bringing them to the acceptance of Islam. It was for this reason that in response to the persistent demands of the unbelievers to send down upon them a punishment like that of which the stories were narrated to them, Almighty God repeatedly said that similar punishment would not be sent upon them, because He did not wish to destroy them altogether from the face of the earth. The third kind of demand is also related in the Holy Quran as would appear from the following verses : "And they say, 'By no means will we believe on thee, till thou cause a fountain to gush forth for us from the earth ; or still thou have a garden of palm trees and grapes and thou cause forth gushing rivers to gush forth in its midst ; or thou make the heaven to fall on us, as thou hast given out, in pieces ; or thou bring God and the angels in our presence



to vouch for thee ; or thou have a house of gold ; or thou mount up into heaven ; nor will we believe in thy mounting up, till thou send down to us a book which we may read.' Say ; Praise be to my Lord ! Am I more than a mortal, an apostle ?" (xvii : 90-94). The unbelievers often demanded such gross and material signs which were opposed to the spiritual conception of faith. For one who thinks, such demands are a clear proof of the numerous miracles wrought by the Holy Prophet and the clear signs shown by him. Not being able to refute these, they demanded new and materials miracles invented by themselves. In fact, the lustre of the truth of the Holy Prophet had so dazzled their eyes and the constant pouring down upon him of heavenly blessings and assistance had so baffled them that no way of escape had been left to them except to make improper demands. For, it can be easily seen that the acceptance of such demands involved an utter raising of the veil which hung between this world and the next. Almighty God has, no doubt, power to show even such wonders and thus to bring the spiritual world on a level with the material, but His wisdom has not ordained it so from the beginning. It has never happened, for instance, that Almighty God should have raised a whole city from the graves to bear testimony to the truth of a prophet. The Gospels, no doubt, relate such an incident but if it was not a dream as we have shown in some other issue of this paper, the testimony of the dead raised to life must have been against the claims of Jesus, for it had a contrary effect, and instead of submission, opposition and persecution grew stronger on the part of his adversaries. It should be remembered that those who made such demands, at last became witnesses to the miracles of the Holy Prophet, for it was they who having accepted Islam afterwards spread it in far and distant lands at the risk of their lives. Their testimonies to the signs of the Holy Prophet are also recorded in the books on traditions. Supposing for the sake of argument that they denied the miracles of our Holy Prophet at first, is it not true that they later on saw their errors and repenting of their denial accepted the Holy Prophet ? It is their testimony borne when they were not actuated by feelings of hostility that really carries any weight, for they themselves confessed



the falsity of their first opinion relating to the denial of miracles.

It is important to bear in mind that the Holy Quran is itself the grandest miracle wrought in the world. Moreover, it is not a miracle which was witnessed only by a few people or a single generation and then lost its force by becoming a story of the past. It is a living miracle, a miracle for all times and all people. In the first place, the sign of punishment which the unbelievers saw with their eyes at that time, is apparent to us in all its glory and can be witnessed by us with the same certainty, for the facts on which it is based are as certain as any fact can possibly be, and not even an opponent can deny them. The basis of this miracle is the undeniable fact that it was demanded at a time when the Holy Prophet with a few companions was suffering the severest persecutions and trials at the hands of his opponents on account of his preaching the doctrine of unity at Mecca. In those days Islam was so weak and defenceless that there was not the least hope that it would outlive the insurmountable difficulties which it had to face. At that time the unbelievers used to say tauntingly to the Muslims how was it, if they had God with them as they asserted, that they were suffering all sorts of troubles and difficulties at their hands and why the God in whom they had their trust did not assist them. In patience had the Muslims to listen to their scoffs, when, inflicting the cruellest tortures upon them, the unbelievers said that they would soon be annihilated and their religion extirpated from the face of the earth, and that if God was on their side why did He not bring the punishment, which He had promised, on the heads of their persecutors. Whatever was asserted in the Holy Quran during this period of the weakness of Islam, when it was, as the circumstances at that time showed, about to be blotted out, is another fact which makes us realise the grandeur of this sign. Such was the critical state in which the Holy Prophet and his companions were at the time that their lives were in danger every moment and their eyes witnessed scenes of failures and bafflement on all sides. In this critical state of affairs every demand of the unbelievers for a sign of punishment was met with the determined response that the sign of the triumph of Islam and the vanquishment of



the unbelievers would certainly be manifested. They were told that Islam which was trampled under feet like a seed at that time, would soon grow into a large tree extending its branches far into the East and the West, and that those who demanded the sign of punishment would be punished with the sword. Clear prophecies were made to the effect that the peninsula of Arabia would be cleared of the unbelievers and unbelief, that it would be subjected to the yoke of the Muslims, that the Unity of God would be established in such a manner that idolatry would for ever be blotted out from its soil, that in place of the danger and difficulties which the Muslims had, peace and security would be brought to them, that Islam would gain strength and would continue to gain power until it dominated over a large part of the world and made its victories in far and distant lands and that a mighty kingdom would be established. Any one who keeps before his eye these two important facts, *viz.*, what a time of weakness, failures and straitness it was for Islam when the prophecy was made, and how opposed the prophecy was to the apparent circumstances of Islam so much so that its fulfilment appeared to be an impossibility at that time,—any one who bearing these two facts in mind considers with an impartial mind the later history of Islam which is known to friends as well as foes, cannot but be convinced that this grand prophecy came to fulfilment in the clearest manner and inspired an awe into the hearts that witnessed it. The manner in which its fulfilment has been witnessed in distant lands and in the far future, strikes an impartial mind with wonder and he cannot ascribe this mighty power and knowledge but to an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being. The truth of this would be as clear to him as if he had witnessed its fulfilment with his own eyes.

Another miracle of the Holy Quran which is manifest to us is the wonderful transformation brought about in the companions of the Holy Prophet through their following the Holy Quran and living in the company of the Holy Prophet. An impartial student of history must confess that it was a great transformation brought about by a hand no less powerful than that of Almighty God when he sees first the darkness, ignorance and superstition in which the Arabians were involved, and



the deeds of evil which they committed before the advent of the Holy Prophet, and witnesses then the entire change which took place and the purity and perfection which attended their morals, their beliefs, their conduct, their practices and their words and deeds. The mighty magnetism of the Holy Prophet had cast a healthy influence upon them which gave them a new life and a new light. In the Holy Quran Almighty God tells us that He found them dead and breathed life into them, that He found them standing on the fearful brink of the bottomless pit and saved them, that He found them sick and healed them, and that He found them in darkness and gave them light. The Holy Quran has given us first the horrible picture of the Arab society as it was before the appearance of the Holy Prophet, and has described then the pure lives which they led after Islam had done its work among them, so that every reader of it may know with certainty that this wonderful transformation was a grand miracle which is manifest even to-day.

A third miracle of the Holy Quran which we witness even now as eye-witnesses, consists in the truths and beauties and the subtle points of faith of which it is full, as well as its eloquent diction and elegant style which are not only, unsurpassed, but the like of which no human genius can produce, and this is a challenge which stands unanswered to this day. Through the thirteen centuries that have elapsed since the birth of Islam, no one has dared to answer its forcible assertion that even if the whole world were gathered together, the like of the Holy Quran could not be produced. This silence on the part of its opponents, is a conclusive proof that human faculties are not able to make its like. Nay, the sum of mortal efforts cannot produce even a single excellence out of the innumerable excellences of the Holy Quran. For instance, one of the excellences of the Holy Quran is that it comprises all sorts of religious truths, and there is not a single truth of this class of which the Holy Quran may be devoid. No other book can be pointed out which should be able to make such an assertion.

A fourth living miracle of the Holy Quran is its marvellous spiritual efficacy which is witnessed in every age. Those who follow it find an acceptance in the



sight of God are granted the blessings of Divine revelations. Almighty God listens to their prayers, and mercifully and graciously favors them with a reply. He informs them of some of the deep secrets of the future like prophets and gives them a distinction from the rest of the world by making them the recipients of His assistance and support. This is a sign which has hitherto distinguished the followers of the Holy Prophet from the followers of other religions, which is clearly witnessed at the present time and which will continue to be witnessed among them to the day of judgment. Among the Mohammadans there are, (and there always have been), men whom Almighty God grants His assistance, favor with true inspirations and dreams, gives glad tidings and informs of the secrets of the future. In short, the miracles of our Holy Prophet were not only witnessed by the Arabians, but have been witnessed by all subsequent generations and are being witnessed even now, which is as much as can be claimed for the truth of a religion.

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### THE ETERNITY OF SOUL.

The doctrine of the eternity of soul and matter is one of the doctrines which are a disgrace to humanity. It is an expression of insolent irreverence towards God that He is not the Creator but only a manufacturer. The doctrine is owned by the new sect of the Hindu religion founded by Pandit Dyanand, and is held on the authority of the Vedas. It is subversive of the Unity and even of the Godhead of the Divine Being, and the objections against it are fatal to its existence. One of its chiefs defects is that it deprives us of rational arguments upon the existence of God. For, if we consider *Jiva* (soul) and matter as existing of themselves and not brought into existence by the Divine Being, we shall have reduced the work of God to mere manufacturing (a). But who can assert with reasonableness that a God is needed for manufacturing when He is not needed for the creation of things. The theory of the self-existence of soul and matter opens the way for the corollary theory of their self-combination, and with the establishment of these two theories, there is an end to the existence of God. The assertion of the co-eternity of soul and matter



with God borders actually upon Atheism, and is practically a denial of the need of God's existence. If the material could come into existence of itself, why should a manufacturer be needed to fashion it into forms? Or if even the work of manufacturing which, compared with creation, is a work of trifling importance, needs a God, how could the higher and more exquisite work of bringing into existence be done without an Author? We thus see that the next step to the belief in the eternity of the soul, is a denial of God Himself.

It is, moreover, clear that the properties of the soul are not the result of combination but belong to it inherently. There is, for instance, the power of vision which enables the soul to look into the deep secrets of the future when it has been thoroughly purged of the low desires after great exertions and struggles. There is also the faculty of reasoning which enables a man to make general concepts and from conclusions. There is again the faculty of love which makes the soul incline to God and submit itself to His Will. There are, besides these, many other faculties belonging to the soul, and these are all its inherent properties. According to the Aryan doctrine of soul they do not, therefore, owe their origin to Almighty God but exist of themselves. Whatever is high-wrought and excellent in nature, is, therefore, according to this theory, self-existing and an entity independent of God, but the work of minor importance and lower quality, *viz.*, the work of manufacturing, in contrast with creation, is looked upon as emanating from the hands of God. The creation of the universe which displays marvellous wisdom and design is, according to this dogma, not the work of God who finds himself puzzled in it, because he cannot create any thing like it. The doctrine, therefore, deals a death-blow to the existence of the Deity.

There are other defects of a vital nature. In the first place, the theory does not regard God as All-powerful, for His inability to create anything is inevitable. His particular sphere is manufacturing only and He cannot bring into existence a single atom or a single germ of life. Even if His existence is admitted, as a God He is weak and impotent, and His death cannot cause any harm to the souls, because He is not their creator. Secondly, the souls are under no obligation



to bow down in submission before Him and to worship Him, for the souls can justly say that as He is not their creator or the creator of any of their properties or faculties, He is not entitled to require them to worship Him and submit themselves wholly to His will. If it be said that He is entitled to their obedience on account of having combined them with matter, we say that even then He has no right to their worship. The business of manufacturing after all proves Him only a weak and a weak and powerless Deity who deserves some little thanks for the business of manufacture which He has done. But as the souls are co-equal and co-eternal with Him, and self-existent as He is, they cannot look upon Him as their Lord and cannot bow down in complete submission before Him, as they must do before their Lord and Creator.

Another objection to this monstrous dogma is, that when God is not the Creator of souls, He cannot pervade them all, from which it follows that there is a screen between God and the souls, which would prevent Him being a knower of secrets and thus the Divinity itself would fall to pieces. It is clear that God cannot be All-pervading, unless He has a complete knowledge of the souls, a fact which is negatived by the assertion that He cannot create other souls. For it must be admitted that when knowledge regarding a thing reaches its perfection, there is no hindrance to making its like. But when we are told that God is not able to create a single soul or a single atom, we can only conclude that His knowledge is not perfect and therefore both His Omnipotence and Omniscience vanish.

The theory further makes the existence of God Himself dependent upon other things. If soul and matter did not exist, there would be no God, for He is quite destitute of the power of creation. Or if we were to suppose that matter and soul cease to exist, the existence of God Himself would come to an end. Matter and soul are not only co-eternal with God, but they are also necessary to His existence. They exist independently of God, but God cannot exist independently of them.

The most serious of all objections to this theory is that according to it, the souls can never have permanent salvation, but after a certain period, they shall be expelled from their abode of bliss to undergo the same



trials and sufferings over again. The Aryas hold that the number of souls is limited, and that God has not the power to make any addition to it. If, therefore, God were to allow them permanent salvation, a time might come when all the souls shall have passed into salvation and then this world would be left without any souls. Permanent salvation therefore threatens the permanent closing of God's manufacturing business. To avoid this difficulty God has arranged that every soul that attains salvation should after a time be expelled from the salvation-yard without any fault. To give this unjust and cruel principle a show of reasonableness, it is sometimes asserted that salvation is temporary, because the good deeds of a man in return for which it is given are also limited. This argument represents the Deity as an inexorable Bunya shopkeeper and not as a merciful and loving God. It makes salvation a commodity which the shopkeeper makes over to the customer on pocketing the money. It is, moreover, a misstatement of facts for the most virtuous deed in recompense for which salvation is granted to a man, is his constancy in faith. It is an unlimited faithfulness to God, by reason of which he is always ready to bear all afflictions, whether relating to his life or property, for the sake of God. His deeds can, therefore, by no means be called limited; for had he lived for unlimited ages upon this earth, he would still have been as constant as ever. If he dies and his deeds are cut off, it is not his fault. The hand of death does not change his constancy into unbelief; he is the same as if he had lived for thousands of years.

Salvation in the true sense of the word is not as the Aryas would have it. It is realized when a man cutting off all lower connections is so lost in the love of God, that like an ardent and true lover, he finds his enjoyment and happiness only in the sight of his beloved one. It is clear that there are only two incentives to love, *viz.*, beauty and goodness. But to benefit by these, we **must** first have a perfect knowledge of God, so that knowing Him perfectly in all His beauty and all His goodness, we may be drawn towards Him and thus love Him. Unless a person has seen His beauty and tasted of His goodness, he cannot love the Almighty Being. Loving Him perfectly, man finds his sole delight in Him. Salvation, therefore, begins in this life, because it takes root in the



love of God, and the same knowledge and love which are the sources of bliss in this world, lead to eternal happiness in the next, which is, in other words, termed 'salvation.' Now the question is, what reasons there are for which a person who has realized this state of love and bliss and accordingly been granted salvation by the grace of God, is again to be deprived of this blessed happiness? Is it only because the Deity irritated at His own powerlessness to create new souls, punishes those already existing by robbing them of what they have acquired? Moreover, it is incomprehensible that a person to whom salvation is granted in this world should be deprived of it when he is in the presence of God. It is more reasonable that when in the company of God, he should advance in his love and knowledge, as it is impossible that in the presence of light, there should be darkness. So the soul has no chance whatever to be deprived of salvation so long as the causes thereof, *viz.*, knowledge and love of God are existing. Has the Deity, we ask, the power to grant a perpetual salvation? If He has, and there is also a constant and faithful servant deserving it, and the requirements of perpetual salvation are also fulfilled by him, why is the Deity so cruel and unjust in His dealings with him? Why does He first take him into His nearness, and make him even an incarnation of His own self and reveal, for instance, the Vedas to him, and then without any regard to all the honour which He has given him, drives him out and subjects him to the disgrace of becoming a worm or an unclean animal? How simple and reasonable is the teaching of Islam in contrast with this abominable dogma of temporary salvation? The Holy Quran says: As to the person who from fear of God purges his soul of all low desires, and turning away his face from all besides God, turns to Him solely, his abode verily is heaven," *i.e.*, a spiritual heaven is, on account of the strength of his faith and knowledge, created within his heart, which is constantly with him and in which he lives. We ask, if there is any verse in the Vedas, revealing the truth underlying the secret of temporary salvation? If not, the doctrine must be condemned as absurd and harmful, and not even supported by the book, on whose authority it is held and preached.



## SOME SUPERSTITIONS AND EVILS SWEEPED OFF BY ISLAM.

The *Rasoom-i-Jahiliyyat* is an important addition to the Muslim religious literature in the Urdu language. The learned author of this valuable work has taken great pains to collect in a condensed form the usages and superstitions prevailing in Arabia before the mighty reform brought over the peninsula by the advent of Islam. Nothing but a comparison of the Cymmerian darkness which overhung pre-Islamite Arabia with the wonderful transformation which the Holy Prophet wrought within a few years can give the reader a true idea of the miraculous nature of the reform which Islam brought about. The time and space at our disposal do not, however, allow us to dwell upon the different aspects of the social, political, moral and spiritual reformation with which Islam blessed Arabia and afterwards the whole world. We will barely mention a few examples of the superstitions and evils which were swept off by Islam.

Idolatry was a deep-rooted evil in Arabia, and the Jews and the Christians fought in vain against it for hundreds of years. Here and there, an individual or a tribe was won over, but the mass of people remained deeply steeped in ignorance and idolatry. In fact, idolatry played an important part in the minutest circumstances of their daily life. Not only had the Ka'aba within it its three hundred and sixty idols affording the worshipper a new deity with every new sun, but each tribe had besides its own special idols. In addition to these, every house in Mecca had an idol which served the purpose of a family god, and so great was the reverence paid to these stone images that the last act of any one who went out on a journey and the first act of him who came back from a journey was to approach the idol reverentially. They prostrated themselves before idols, made circuit round them, made sacrifices in their name and gave them offerings. Mujahid says that his master related to him that on one occasion his elders gave him a cup of milk and butter to take it as an offering to the family-idol. He obeyed the orders though, if it not had been for fear, he would have himself taken the butter and milk for it was in his presence feasted



upon by a dog which, to add insult to injury to the stone deity, made water upon it. Besides the images which were set aside for regular worship, the pre-Islamic Arabs worshipped every white and beautiful stone that they saw and where stones could not be found heap of sand were worshipped. When a person set out on a journey, he generally took four stones with him, three of which served the purpose of a hearth to cook food and the fourth that of a deity for worship. Those who did not take this precaution worshipped any stone they found or raised a heap of sand with their own hands and milked a she-camel upon it and then worshipped it so long as they stayed there. Consider the mighty and glorious transformation which within less than a quarter of a century cleared the whole peninsula of every trace of stone and idolworship, and changed the superstitious people, who abjectly prostrated themselves before every stone or heap of sand, into preachers of the Unity of God ! That mighty evil which centuries of Jewish and Christian efforts had battled with, without affecting it in the slightest degree, was swept off by a single stroke never to revive again in that land. If Almighty God raised His messengers to reform evils, which no sensible person can deny, the man who brought about this mighty transformation in Arabia was certainly the greatest of all Divine messengers, for such the greatness of his work clearly shows him to be.

Evils affecting the sexual relations were equally great and deeprooted. Polyandry was practised and prostitution was recognised as a necessary institution in the same manner as in any civilized country to-day. The practice of keeping mistresses was also in vogue in the same manner as it is now in Christendom. A doctrine similar to the *Niyog* doctrine of the Arya Samaj had also an existence. As in the Arya Samaj, the husband himself allowed his wife to have illicit intercourse. It was called *istibza* and is thus explained in Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon : "*istibza* denotes a kind of matrimonial connection practised by people in the Time of Ignorance ; i. e., A woman's desiring sexual intercourse with a man only to obtain offspring by him: a man of them used to his female slave or his wife, (send thou to such a one, and demand of him sexual intercourse to obtain offspring) ; and he used to separate himself from her, and not touch her, until her pregnancy



by that man became apparent : and this he did from a desire of obtaining generous offspring." The Arya Samaj in India still adheres to, and acts upon, this savage doctrine which it thinks to have been specially revealed through the Vedas. But that it is only a remnant of savage ideas is clear from the fact that it was practised even by ignorant Arabs before the light of Islam dawned upon them. In one respect only does the Arya Samaj doctrine of *Niyog* differ from the *istibza'* of the Arabs of the Time of Ignorance, *viz.*, that while the latter resorted to it only with a desire to raise good offspring, the Arya Samaj allows the practice even in cases when there are only sensual motives. But it must be borne in mind that this practice in Arabia was limited to the lower strata of society, and the nobility was quite free from this evil. Another evil existing in connection with matrimonial connections was the custom of the son inheriting along with other property the wives of his father and marrying them himself. All these evils were swept off by Islam. The allegation that Islam sanctioned an evil in the form of polygamy is based on a misconception. Islam permits polygamy only in exceptional cases and does not make polygamy a universal rule against monogamy. And the fact is that if polygamy is not allowed in the exceptional cases when it becomes absolutely necessary, the blackest of evils must find their way into society. All the nations that have prohibited polygamy have been obliged to sanction prostitution and other evils. So polygamy as permitted by Islam is not an evil, but the only remedy for an evil, of which society can in no other way be freed.

The evil of drunkenness raged in Arabia in pre-Islamite days to such an extent that all classes of society prided themselves on the excess of drinking. Only women abstained from the evil. Large quantities of wine were kept in every house and the people had their drinking bouts several times during day and night. It is related that when the order of the prohibition of intoxicating liquors was first given by the Holy Prophet, so many jars of wine were broken that it flowed like rain-water in the streets of Medina. Gambling was another evil which like drunkenness affected almost every individual. The man who did not gamble was looked down upon in society as a niggard, and those who



gambled most recklessly were looked upon as great and generous men. When a poet eulogised a man, he extolled his gambling habits in particular.

The most horrible of all the evils of the Time of Ignorance was the burying alive of daughters. The evil had prevailed in Arabia for centuries before the advent of Islam and every tribe was guilty of this inhuman practice. The origin of the evil was probably a high sense of jealousy, and the political unrest and unsettled state of government in Arabia favored the growth of this horrible practice, for the men of higher ranks in society were regardful lest in the struggles which ensued their women should fall into the hands of the enemy. Whatever the origin of this custom, it had grown to a fearful extent in Arabia, and young girls were entombed alive very frequently. Generally when the girl was five or six years old, she was adorned and embellished and her father conducted her to a pit dug in the desert. Standing on its brim, he would ask the innocent child to peep into it and on her doing so pushed her from behind so as to throw her into it, and the cries of the helpless creature were only stifled by the earth with which the pit was immediately afterwards filled. A touching incident of this nature was described in the presence of the Holy Prophet by one of his companions who had perpetrated a similar deed before his conversion to Islam. He related that he had a daughter whom he sought to kill when she had grown old enough to be able to talk well. She was loving, obedient and submissive, and when he called her to him, she always came to him running with great joy. One day he called her and told her to follow him which she did with pleasure. He then conducted her to a well and holding her hand threw her into it. "Father, father" she cried piteously but he was not moved to compassion. When he had finished his story, tears began to flow from the eyes of the Prophet until his beard became wet with them. Then he told him to act righteously in the future. There was also a custom of making an agreement with the bride at the time of marriage that the girls which she should give birth to should be killed and spared alternately. In this case it was the mother who was required to perpetrate the cruel deed of burying alive her innocent and beloved daughter, and if she refused



to do it, she was divorced. The horrible ceremony was performed publicly, all the women of the family being witnesses of the savage performance. Sometimes girls were drowned in water or thrown down from a hill. Islam swept off these horrible practices with a single word. Had this been the only reform brought about by the Holy Prophet, he would still have stood highest among the benefactors of mankind.

Some other superstitions of the pre-Islamite Arabs may only be briefly noticed. When a renowned or generous man died, a she-camel was left at his grave without any food or water until she died by wasting away. The she-camel was thrown into a pit, dug by the grave, wherein she was left, her fore-shank bound to her arm and the head turned backwards, without food or water until she died. The name given to it was *baliyyah*, and the cruelty to her was the result of the belief that the man on whose tomb such a she-camel was left to perish would rise from the dead riding upon her, while the other dead in whose case the practice was not resorted to would rise walking. There was also a superstition that when the bones of the dead body became decayed, a bird like an owl came forth from the head which was called the *sudá* or the *háma*.

In the Time of Ignorance whenever there was a drought, rain was sought in the following manner. Bundles of *sala* and *Ushar*, two kinds of plants, were tied to the tails of bulls and cows, and fire was then kindled therein and the bulls were then sent up mountains with the fire burning on their back. The superstitious belief was that the burning fire resembled the gleaming of lightning and that rain water was thus made to descend. This inhuman practice is frequently mentioned in verses.

A rather harmless superstition existed in connection with the punishment of murder. Where the person slain belonged to a powerful tribe and the murderer to one which was comparatively weak, retaliation, *i.e.*, death of the murderer, was insisted upon and all offers to pay the blood-money were rejected. But when the tribe which sought revenge had not sufficient power to enforce its will, a milder course was adopted. An arrow shot upwards was considered to reveal the Divine judgment and will as to whether peace or war should



follow, that is to say, whether the blood-money should be accepted or whether revenge should be sought. If the arrow came back with blood on it, it was a sign that the latter course should be adopted and blood should be actually shed, and if the arrow came back free from all blood spots, it was an indication for a peaceful agreement and the blood-money was accepted. Of course the arrow was always clear and thus it never indicated that revenge should be taken, but notwithstanding this the superstition did not die out till the advent of Islam. The acceptance of blood-money, however attenuating the circumstances might be, was considered to be disgraceful course for the heirs of the deceased, and nothing but the superstitious practice of shooting the arrow afforded an excuse for such a course.

The stinging which a man felt when he was hungry was attributed by the pre-Islamite Arabs to the bite of a serpent, called the *safar*, which was thought to stick to the ribs of a person.

Many of the diseases were attributed by the Arabs of the Time of Ignorance to demonical possession. In all such cases and in madness the most popular remedy was to make the sick person carry some kind of filth or rotten bones about his neck. The poets of the Time of Ignorance frequently refer to this practice. A woman whose son died notwithstanding her observation of the practice says : " I made him to carry filth but it did not benefit him, and lives cannot be saved from death." In chronic diseases especially the belief was that the person was only tormented by evil spirits because he had killed a snake or some other reptile. It was thought that the evil spirits which had been offended in this manner would not be pacified till compensation was made for the supposed guilt. The method of making compensation was this. Some camels of clay were made and loads of wheat, barley, and dates were placed on them. At sunset they were placed in a hole in the western direction. If on the following morning they were found in the same state in which they were left, the conclusion drawn was that the evil spirits considered the compensation rendered to be insufficient. Their number was then increased until on some morning the artificial camels were found prostrate on earth and their loads upset. This was considered to be a sign that the evil spirits had



accepted the compensation and had been pacified and hence it was taken to be a sure indication of recovery. It was owing to the same fear of evil spirits that when one of them killed a snake, he placed some cow-dung upon its head. This was considered to be a safeguard against the evil spirits wreaking vengeance on him.

The fidelity of a wife in the absence of her husband was also tested by means of an absurd superstition. When a man was about to make a journey, he went to a tree and fastened a string to it, or tied one branch of a tree to another. On his return home if he found the tie unbroken, it was an indication that his wife had been faithful to him in his absence; otherwise it was supposed that she had been unfaithful. It was called the *ratam* or *ratma*. The *ratam* was also fastened as a remedy for fever, the idea being that the fever of the person who tied the *ratam* was transferred to him that untied it. The unchastity of a woman was also inferred from the circumstance that a horse marked by branding should perspire under her husband.

Women whose children died in infancy considered the trampling of the dead body of a man murdered by deceit to be a charm against the disease. When a person was lost and no trace of him could be found, they used to go to some old well situated in an out of the way place and looking into the well called him aloud. If no voice was heard in response to their call, it was considered that the person whom they sought was dead. This was done in the dark and stillness of the night. When a man arrived at a town where there was pestilence, he brayed like an ass and wore a hare's bones as a charm against the evil spirits of the place and its pestilence. Causing a man to wear the ornaments of females was considered a remedy for snake-bite. The blood of the middle finger of a king was supposed to be a remedy for the bite of a mad dog.

These are only a few examples of the superstitions and evils that prevailed in Arabia. The change that was brought about over the peninsula within a few years by the Holy Prophet, and the wonderful manner in which all these evils and superstitions were swept off from the soil with a single stroke are sufficient to convince any sensible person that the man who wrought this mighty transformation had more than mortal power.



## THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM AND THEIR CONTRAST WITH OTHER RELIGIONS.

First of all we thank God who has placed us under the benign rule of a peaceful Government which allows us to preach and propagate our religious beliefs, and by its principles of justice, fair-mindedness and religious neutrality has removed every obstacle from our way. After this brief prefatory note, we wish to say something about the different religious beliefs entertained by the people of this country, and assure the gentlemen present that so far as it lies in our power, we will try to express ourselves in words least offensive to the feelings of those of whose creeds we will speak. Let us at the same time candidly say that truth has always a certain bitterness in it, and some men are from their very nature prone to be offended even when a just criticism is passed on their religious beliefs. The effect of this natural inclination it is beyond our power to remove, and we beg to be excused if any word of ours happens to wound the religious susceptibilities of any hearer, for it is impossible for any man to deal with what he sincerely believes and knows to be false and injurious doctrines, and still be able to please those who own such doctrines. This is a difficulty the solution of which has not been found yet, nor, if human nature remains unchanged, is such a solution possible.

After deep deliberation we have come to know that the great religious excitement which is maddening the people in this country and the ever-increasing diversity of religious sects which is witnessed here, is really due to the cause that the hold of spiritual power over the hearts of men is quite loosened and the fear of God has utterly vanished away. The heavenly light by which a man can distinguish between truth and falsehood is almost extinguished in most hearts and notwithstanding the outward religious fervor, atheism is gaining ground day by day. The tongue, no doubt, utters the name of God but agnosticism has taken a deep root in the heart. The inner life of the people bears testimony to this fact. Every profession is made with the lips but not one of these is carried out in practice. We are speaking generally and do not mean to attack any person who may be really leading a righteous life. In general, however, it is



perfectly true that the real object of religion is lost sight of altogether. Actual holiness of the heart, true love for God, real sympathy with man, meekness, mercy, justice, lowliness, and all other noble moral qualities piety, purity and righteousness which is in fact the soul of religion, are most of all neglected, and the hearts of men are generally dead to these. What a sad picture of religion that while religious quarrels and controversies are becoming more and more frequent day by day, and great fuss is made about the name of religion, the real worth of it is not cared for and spirituality is becoming a thing of the past !

The aim and end of religion is to know the true and living God who has created the world, to attain to that stage of perfection in His love at which the love of others besides Him is completely consumed, to have full sympathy with His creatures and to lead a life of true and perfect purity. But we see that this aim is utterly neglected and the majority of religious creeds is in fact some one or other form of atheism. Almighty God is not known and recognised, and hence the increasing boldness upon the commission of sin. For, it is plain that unless we have knowledge of a thing, there is no love or fear of it on our part. The prevalence of sin in the world is, therefore, due to an absence of true knowledge concerning the Divine Being. The chief criterion of a true religion is that it should point out the means to a true knowledge of God, so that through knowledge men may be kept back from sins, and realizing the Divine beauty and glory, they may so love God as to deem even a momentary estrangement from Him more painful than the severest tortures of hell. The truth is that freedom from sin and the love of God are the highest aims of man's life, and in these lies in fact the true bliss which is known as the heavenly life. Every desire which goes against the pleasure of God, is really a flame of hell-fire, and to indulge in such desires is to lead a hellish life. The question hence arises, how can a man be saved from this hellish life ? We answer this question with the knowledge which we have received from God, that no one is saved from this fire except by a true and perfect knowledge of God. The flood of passions and desires rages high and nothing but the embankment of a perfect knowledge of God can withstand it. Salvation which



means a freedom from the control of passions and desires, cannot, therefore, be attained unless our faith is based on the impregnable fortress of perfect knowledge which no flood can destroy. The fact that our appraisement of a thing or our love or fear of it, depends only upon our correct knowledge of it, needs no argument. Give a diamond worth a million pounds to a young child and he would not set upon it a higher value than a mere plaything. If honey mixed with poison is given to a person who is ignorant of the fact, he would take it for honey and eat it with pleasure, not knowing that the effect would be fatal. But you cannot thrust your hand into a hole which you know to be the hole of a serpent, for you know that such an act might bring about your destruction. Similarly no one would dare to take poison with a knowledge of it, for he knows that it must cause his death. What is the reason then that you do not fear the death which the transgression of Divine commandments must certainly bring down upon you? Only that you have not such knowledge of the effect of your transgressions as of the biting of a snake or of poison. It is certain then that the knowledge of loss or injury deters a man from doing the deed which involves such loss or injury, and no belief in redemption can act as such deterrent. Is it not true that even the most daring and habitual burglar would not break into a house where he is sure to be caught and punished? Are not the most violent passions subdued when their effect is known to be sure and certain destruction? A robber would not in broad daylight dare to lay his hand upon a bag of money lying in a shop if he knew that there is a sufficient guard of armed police watching the shop. Are criminals restrained from theft and extortion because of their firm faith in the redemption of sins, or because their hearts feel the awe of execution? Or is it more true that the police and the fear of punishment are the real deterrents? This is a principle the truth of which is witnessed not only in the case of men, but also of animals. Even a lion in fury would not throw himself into burning fire though he sees his prey on the other side of it. A wolf would not fall upon a sheep at whose head is standing a watcher with a drawn sword and a loaded gun.



It is a most true and sound principle that to be saved from sins, man requires a certain knowledge of God and not any redemption. We say to you truly that if the people of Noah had the perfect knowledge which generates the fear of God, they would not have been drowned, and if the people of Lot had fully recognised their Lord, they would not have been stoned to death, and if the people of this country had been granted the true knowledge of God which makes one tremble at the idea of a transgression of His commandments, it would not have been thus destroyed with the plague. But a deficient knowledge cannot avail in the least, for vain is the love which is not perfect, and vain is the fear which is not perfect, and vain is the faith which is not perfect, and vain is the knowledge which is not perfect. If you do not take food in a sufficient quantity, it would not sustain you, and if the full dose of medicine is not administered, it would not do any good. One grain cannot satisfy your hunger, nor one drop of water quench your thirst. How can you then, O ye of little courage and slow in the search of truth, how can you hope to be the recipients of the vast blessings and unmeasured grace of God by a little knowledge and a little love and a little fear? It is His to purify you from sins and to fill your hearts with His love and awe, and He has established the law that all this is granted after a man has attained to certainty in His knowledge, for knowledge is the root from which love and fear spring. He who is given a perfect knowledge is also granted perfect love and perfect fear, and he who is granted these, has got salvation, because he is purified from sin. For this salvation, therefore, we do not stand in need of the shedding of blood, or of crucifixion or of atonement. What we require for its attainment is only a sacrifice, and that a sacrifice of our own self. This is a requirement of our very nature and this is the true significance of Islam. Islam means the laying down of head for being slaughtered and to bow down with entire submission at the Divine threshold. The beloved name of Islam is the soul of the whole of Law and the essence of all the commandments. To lay down one's self willingly and with a joyful heart for being slaughtered which is the true significance of Islam, means a perfect love, while perfect love indicates perfect knowledge.



The word Islam therefore, clearly signifies that true sacrifice, which is necessary for the salvation of man, requires perfect love and perfect knowledge and not any thing else. Referring to this Almighty God says in the Holy Quran: "The flesh of these, (i.e., the animals slaughtered) does not reach God, nor yet their blood, but the sacrifice that God accepts from you is that you should fear Him and walk in righteousness for His sake."

It should be borne in mind that the truth which underlies all the principles of Islam is that indicated by the word Islam itself, and the aim of all its commandments is that a man should attain to the stage of perfection signified by Islam. Hence the Holy Quran emphatically teaches that Almighty God should be made the sole object of one's desires and love. It shows now His beauty and goodness and calls attention then to His countless gifts and favors, for beauty and favours are the two incentives to love. According to the Holy Quran, Almighty God is one and without any partner in His excellences, and He is eternally free from every defect. In Him are found all the perfect attributes and by Him are displayed all the mighty powers. From Him the whole creation comes into existence and to Him all the affairs return. He is the fountain-source of all blessings and the Judge of retribution. Being remote, He is very near, and being near, He is still far off. He is above all but still it cannot be said that beneath Him there is anything else, and He is the most hidden of all things, but it cannot be said that any thing is more manifest than He. He is Himself living and everything has its life from Him. He is His own support and everything finds support from Him. He bears everything and there is nothing has come into existence independently of Him and nothing can exist without Him. He comprehends all, but the manner in which He does so, cannot be described. He is the light of everything that is in earth and heavens, and every light has shone forth from His hand and is a shadow of His person. He is the Lord of all the worlds and there is no soul which has not been brought forth by Him and has come into existence by itself. Nor is there any faculty of a soul which has not been brought into existence by Him. His manifold blessings are of two kinds. Firstly, such as are not given as a reward for any previous deed of a



doer and which exist from the beginning, as earth, heavens, sun, moon and stars, fire, water, air and all other things which have been created for our comfort. Everything that was necessary to sustain us, was created for us by Almighty God long before we came into existence or any deed was done by us. Who can say that the sun was created because of any meritorious deed done by him, or that the earth was brought into existence because he had done a highly virtuous deed? In short, these blessings of God were created by His mercy displayed long before the existence of man and they are not the result of any deed done by him. The other kind of Divine blessings is the outcome of His mercy displayed on the good deeds of men, and this does not stand in need of explanation.

The Holy Quran further teaches us that the person of God is free from every fault and defect, and that He wishes that human beings should also by following His injunctions become free from every defect and bepurified of every impurity. Thus He says: "Whoever remains blind in this world, and does not see God, shall remain blind after death and his darkness will not be dispelled." For, the truth is that the eyes to see God are granted in this world, and any one who leaves this world without getting the eyes to see God, shall not see God in the next life. In this verse Almighty God has given us clearly to understand what height of spiritual advancement He wants man to reach, and what stage of perfection a man can attain to by following His commandments. How Almighty God can be seen in this very world, is then stated in the Holy Quran. Thus it says: "Who wishes that he should see in this world the God who is the true Lord and the Creator, should do the deeds of virtue which are free from every sort of corruption, and in worshipping his Lord he should not be guilty of any *shirk*." The first portion of this verse requires a man to do deeds of virtue which are free from impurity and every contamination, by which are meant deeds which are neither done that they may be seen of others, nor do they generate vanity in the heart of a man that he is the doer of such great and excellent deeds, nor are they incomplete or defective, nor do they savor of aught but sincere personal love entertained towards God and are saturated with true faithfulness and



perseverance. The second portion of the verse requires a man to abstain from *shirk*, i.e., setting up with God such false deities as the sun, the moon, the stars of heaven, the physical forces of nature, the elements or anything else that is upon earth or the heavens, or setting too high a value upon the physical means and placing so much reliance on them as to consider them actually effective without any reservation like God Himself, or giving an importance to one's own resources and efforts, for this too is a sort of *shirk*. On the other hand, when a man has done everything that lies in his power and exercised his abilities to his best, he should still be conscious of his utter weakness and ignorance, and ascribe everything to the mighty power and deep knowledge of God and not to his own power or learning. Our soul should constantly be in a state of perfect submission and prostration at the Divine threshold, and thus draw His favors and blessings. Unless we make our condition like the helpless cripple who lying in a desert parched with thirst, suddenly sees a spring of sweet and clear water and halting and limping takes himself to it, and applies his burning lips to the cool water, not parting them until he is satiated,—I say, unless we fully realize our own utter weakness and inability and the mighty power and beneficent grace of God which we constantly draw upon, we are not free from *shirk* and do not deserve to be called Unitarians.

With respect to His own attributes of excellence and perfection, Almighty God says in the Holy Quran : "Your God is the God who is one in His person and without any participator in His attributes. He is God alone, for there is no being which is like Him eternal and everlasting, nor has any being its attributes like His attributes." The knowledge of man is acquired and limited, but the knowledge of God is neither acquired nor limited. The power of hearing in man depends upon the transmission of sound by air and is moreover a limited power, but the power of hearing in God is an inherent power and is unlimited. The power of seeing things in man depends upon the light of the sun or some other light and is limited, but Almighty God sees things without the assistance of any light and His power of sight is an unlimited one. The power of man to make things depend upon the existence of material and is a limited



power while the act of making must occupy some time, but the creating power of God does not stand in need of any existing material, is unlimited and does not depend upon time in its exercise. As there is nothing that is like Him, so there is nothing whose attributes are like His attributes. For if there is any defect in one of His attributes, all His attributes must be defective, and if one of his attributes can be possessed by any one else, then all His attributes can be so possessed. Therefore His unity cannot be established unless He is regarded one and without any partner in His person as well as His attributes. The remaining portion of the chapter above quoted says that God is neither a father nor a son, for He stands in need of none, not even of a father or a son. This is the doctrine of Unity taught by the Holy Quran which is necessary for a perfect faith.

So far as to belief. We will now consider the course pointed out by the Holy Quran for observance in practice. The summary of its teachings regarding our treatment with others is contained in the verse: "Almighty God commands you to be just and fair to others, *i.e.*, to do to them as they do to you and (if you wish to attain to a higher stage of perfection) to do good to those who have done no good to you, and (to rise higher still) to do good to others not to lay an obligation upon them or to receive thanks in return, but with the natural inclination of a mother for her child; and He forbids you to do any violence, or remind others of any obligation you have placed them under or do any evil to one who has done good or shown sympathy to you." As an explanation of this verse, the Holy Quran says on another occasion: "The righteous feed the poor and the orphans and the prisoners, simply for the sake of, and out of their love for, God, and say to them, 'We give you food simply for the sake of God and do not wish from you any reward or thanks in return for this service.'" Again with reference to the requital of an evil, the Holy Quran says: "The retribution of an evil is an evil like it, but if a person forgives and his forgiveness is conducive to any good and does not lead to further evil (for instance, the evil-doer is likely to reform his conduct and refrain from evil in future), forgiveness under these circumstances will be better than requital, and the person so



forgiving shall find his reward from God." Thus the Holy Quran does not teach us to turn always the other cheek, whether in place or out of place, for this is against true wisdom, and a good done to an evil-doer is sometimes equivalent to the doing of an evil to a good man. The Holy Quran further teaches us : " If any one does good to thee, return thou his good with a greater good, and the result would be that even if there is an enmity between you, it will turn into sincere friendship and he would be to thee like a friend and a near relative." Other verses containing teachings on this point are: "One of you should not backbite another : does one of you like that he should eat the flesh of his brother who is dead ? Nor should one class of people laugh at another that it belongs to a higher caste and the other to a lower : haply those who are laughed at might be better than the others. Verily the more honored near God is he who is greater in virtue and righteousness, and the distinction of castes is nothing with Him. Do not call others with contemptuous names which they regard as offensive or insulting, otherwise you will be counted wicked near God. Keep away from idols and from falsehood, for they are both impurities. And when you speak, speak with reason and wisdom and refrain from absurd talk. And you should all in one body and with all your faculties and powers devote yourselves to the obedience of God."

Again, the Holy Quran says : "The manifold occupations of the world divert your mind from God and you remain in this state of remissness from Him until you visit the graves. This is an error and you will soon know it, I tell you again that this is an error which you will soon discover. Had you the knowledge of certainty, you would have soon seen by its application your hell, and would have known that this your life in sin is a hellish life. And if your certainty becomes greater, you would see with the eye of certainty that your life led in sin and disobedience to God is a hellish life. A time will then come when you will be thrown into hell and there you will be questioned of your excesses in the dainties that were given you, (i.e., being made to suffer actually the punishment you will realize that certainty)." These verses show that certainty is of three kinds : firstly, that which is obtained through reasoning and deduction, as, to give a homely illustration, the existence



of fire in a place is inferred from the presence of smoke ; secondly, the certainty which is gained when the thing itself is seen, as fire in the above case ; thirdly, the highest degree of certainty is attained when the existence of a thing is fully realized as that of fire by casting one's hand into it. These are the three degrees of certainty which are termed respectively (a) certainty, feeling of certainty and knowledge a of certainty. In these verses Almighty God has taught man that his true happiness lies in the nearness and love of God, and in breaking connection with Him a man leads a hellish life which ultimately becomes clear to him, though it be at the time when he is about to depart from this world and leave all his property behind him.

Referring to man's heavenly life, the Holy Quran says : " For him who feareth (to stand in) the presence of God (shall be given) two paradises," which means that whoever out of respect for the honor and majesty of his Lord, and fearing that he shall have to stand one day in His presence, forsakes sin, shall be granted two paradises, viz., a paradise in this world and a paradise in the next. The paradise in this world means a heavenly life which begins with a pure transformation in this life when Almighty God becomes the sole administrator of one's affairs, and the paradise in the next means the eternal bliss and enjoyments of after-life which shall be granted to the righteous. Elsewhere the Holy Quran says : " Verily we have prepared chains and collars and that which burns the heart for those who do not believe in God, and hence do not entertain love for God and are bent low upon earth. (Their feet are enchained with the love of this world and in their necks are collars of estrangement from God which keep their heads bent down upon the world and do not allow them to raise them up towards heaven, and their hearts burn with the unsatisfied desires of this world). But the righteous are made to drink in this very world of a cup which is mixed with camphor which cools the love of this world and quenches the thirst of seeking the world. It is a spring of camphor which is granted them and they divide it into running streams and thus place its refrigerent waters within the reach of the thirsty near and far. (When the standing water of the spring is made to run into a stream and the power of faith is strengthened) they are then made to drink of another



cup with which is mixed ginger. (For when the camphorated cup has benumbed the love of this world, another syrup is needed which should generate, in the heart the warmth of Divine love. This is what is meant by the syrup mixed with ginger because the quality of ginger is hot, and it is, therefore, a symbolic expression for the warmth of love). It is a spring which is called *salsabeel*, (lit., ask the way from God) meaning that when the wayfarer has reached the spiritual eminence indicated in the preceding verse, he is entirely in the hands of God and asks his way from no other than God." Again, the Holy Quran says: "Verily he who has purified his soul is released from the constraint of sensual passions and is granted a heavenly life, but whoever remains bent down upon earth and does not turn to heaven, shall end his days in grief and despair."

As the high stages of man's advancement described in the verses quoted above, cannot be attained by a man's own efforts, the Holy Quran repeatedly invites us to pray to God and to exert ourselves to our utmost in His path. Thus it says: "Pray to Me and I will accept your prayer," and again: "And if my servants question thee as to the proof of My existence, as to how they should know that God exists, say to them that very near: I answer him who calls upon Me, and I hear his voice when he invokes Me and I speak to him. They should, therefore, make themselves fit to receive My world and have a perfect faith in Me so that they may find My way." And on another occasion, the Word of God says: "Those who try hard and exert themselves to their utmost to find Us—We surely guide them into our paths." And again: "Besides prayers and exertions in the way of God, you should also live in the company of the truthful and righteous ones, for this is also necessary in order that you may see God."

These are the commandments by walking in which a man realizes the true nature of Islam, for as we have already said the true significance of Islam is to lay oneself before God like the sheep that is to be slaughtered, to lose all one's desires, passions and intentions and to be completely lost in the will and pleasure of God, to subject oneself to death, to love Him so entirely as to obey all His commandments out of love and not any other motive, to get eyes which see with God, ears which hear with God, a heart which is wholly inclined



to Him and a tongue which does not move to utter a word until moved by Him. This is the stage at which all the labours of the spiritual wayfarer end, and all the passions and desires of man undergo a death. Then does the mercy of God with His living word and brilliant lights grant him a new life. Then he is honored with the sweet Word of God, and that most subtle Light which no reason can discover, nor eye can see, itself comes near to the heart of man, as He says : " We are nearer him than his vein of life." With such nearness does Almighty God honor mortal man. Then comes the time that every blindness and darkness is removed and a man sees his God and hears His voice, and finds himself completely enwrapped in His mantle of light. Then is the reality of religion reached, and seeing his God a man throws off the dirty clothing of worldly life and wears the magnificent robes of Divine light. The promises of paradise and of seeing God are not then simply prospective promises to him, but he actually tastes of the delights of paradise in this very life and sees God and speaks to Him, and thus realizes even here all those promises. Thus Almighty God says : " Those who say that our Lord is the God who possesses all the perfect attributes and who has no partner in His person and attributes, and remain faithful to their word, their faith not being shaken by any trial or adversity, however hard it may be—the angels of God descend upon them and Almighty God Himself speaks to them and says to them ' Do not fear the enemies that stand against you and the trials that befall you, nor be grieved for the bitter adversities which befell you in the past, for I am with you, and be joyful that I grant you in this very world the paradise which was promised to you.' "

It should be borne in mind that these are facts supported by the strongest testimony. Within the sphere of Islam there have been thousands of the righteous people who have actually tasted the fruits of the spiritual paradise in this life. In fact Islam is the blessed religion whose true followers have been made by Almighty God the inheritors of all the righteous servants of God who have passed before them, and the heavenly blessings that were granted to them variously granted all to the Muslims. He has accepted the prayer which He Himself taught in the Holy Quran in the



following words : " O Lord ! show us the right path, the path of the righteous whom Thou hast favored and honored in every way and who have received from Thee all sorts of blessings, (who have received the honor of being spoken to by Thee, of having their prayers accepted by Thee and of having been granted victory, assistance and guidance from Thee) ; and keep us away from the path of those upon whom Thy wrath has descended and of those who having forsaken Thy path have betaken to erroneous paths " This is the prayer which is addressed to Almighty God by every Muslim five time daily in his prayers. It shows clearly that a person who passes his days in blindness from God, lives and dies in hell, and that he only really obeys God and attains true salvation who recognises God and has a perfect faith in His existence, for only such a one is granted power to forsake sin and to love God with his whole heart. The religion, therefore, in which there is no yearning for a certain Divine revelation, which is one of the highest Divine blessings, is not from God, nor is that prophet true who has not taught people to seek the path of certain Divine revelation and perfect Divine knowledge. For, the highest aim of man's life, and the only way in which he can be released from the bondage of sin, is that he should attain a certain knowledge regarding the existence of God and His retribution. But certainty regarding the Divine Being who is the most hidden of all things, is impossible unless from Him is heard the voice ' I AM,' and unless a man witnesses the clear and manifest signs of His existence. Such certainty can never be obtained from the source of reason, for the deductions of reason lead us no further than that there should be a God, for this is the only conclusion with regard to the existence of a Creator that a man can arrive at by deep reflection over the consummate order and perfect skill displayed in the universe. But it can be easily seen that such a conclusion is only an inference suggested by certain facts, while the statement that God actually exists requires a sound and conclusive proof about which there should not be the slightest doubt. The necessity of the existence of a thing and its actual existence are two quite different things. In short, in the midst of the great religious excitement of the present day, the seeker after truth



should not forget the great truth that only that religion is from God which can show God with perfect certainty.

We will now take some of the more important religions which are showing great missionary activity, and see whether they can take a man to the stage of perfect certainty regarding Divine existence, and whether their scriptures contain the noble promise that they can make their true followers the recipients of a certain Divine revelation, and whether if they do so this promise is borne out by actual facts at the present time. First of all We take the religion which is named after Christ. The answer to the questions proposed above for solution is very easy and simple in its case, for the Christians are all one in the belief that after the time of Christ the fountains of Divine revelation and inspiration are closed to all. The blessing of Divine revelation has according to them been left behind and it will now remain closed to the day of judgment. The door of Divine grace by which alone salvation as shown above can be obtained being shut up, a new plan of salvation has been set up which is opposed to the established principles of the world, and which is contrary to human reason and Divine Justice and Mercy. It is said that Jesus Christ bore the sins of the world and chose to die on the cross, that by his death others may be delivered, and that Almighty God killed His own innocent son to save the sinners. We are unable to understand how the pitiable death of one man can purify the hearts of others from the impure quality of sin, and how by the murder of one innocent man others can be absolved of the sins and crimes which they have committed. This course is, on the other hand, directly opposed to justice and mercy, for to punish the innocent in place of the offender is against justice, while causing the son to be murdered cruelly with no fault on his part is contrary to Divine mercy, and the whole affair is a meaningless transaction. We have already stated that the true cause of the prevalence of sin is the absence of true Divine knowledge. If, therefore, the cause is not removed, the effect cannot be annulled, for the cause must bring about its effect. It is a strange philosophy that sin is supposed to be made non-existent while its cause which is a want of Divine knowledge remains as strong as ever. Experience shows that without full knowledge of a thing we cannot



know its true value, nor can we love or fear it. But love and fear are the only incentives to action and a man does not do or abstain from doing a deed except from the motive of either love or fear. Therefore it is clear that unless the love or fear of the Divine Being is generated in the heart which depends upon a true and perfect knowledge of God, it is impossible that a man should be released from the bondage of sin. But so far as the Christians are concerned, we are bound to state and that for the sake of truth that their knowledge of God is very imperfect and ambiguous. The doors of Divine revelation are for ever closed and miracles ended with Jesus and his apostles. What is left then in our hands to judge the truth of the Christian religion except the authority of reason, but the deifying of a man has already set reason at naught. If the old stories of miracles as narrated in the Gospels are adduced in support of Christianity, various objections may be put forth against this evidence by one who does not admit the truth of the Christian religion. In the first place, it is impossible to ascertain what amount of truth is contained in these narratives and what reality. For there seems to be no doubt that the evangelists were great exaggerators. For instance, in one of the Gospels it is written that if all the things which Jesus did had been written in books, the world could not have contained those books. This is a most extravagant statement. How could the world prove insufficient for the record of deeds which were contained in it in an unrecorded state, deeds done by one man within the limited period of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years in a very small province. Secondly, the miracles stated to have been performed by Jesus were in no way superior to the miracles of Moses. Nay, even the miracles of Elijah display a greater power than those of Jesus. If therefore the performance of certain miracles can make a man God, many of the prophets shall be entitled to Divinity.

The alleged Divinity of Jesus is sometimes supported on the ground that Jesus called himself the son of God or that he is so designated in some book. This is an idea which deserves to be laughed at. In the Bible many men are designated as the sons of God and to some even the epithet God is applied. They all, therefore, belong to the same category and one of them cannot



come a God to the exclusion of all others. Even if the title son of God had not been used for any one besides Jesus, it would have been absurd to interpret it literally and draw from it an argument for the divinity of Jesus, when such metaphors abound in the Word of God. But when the title on whose basis divinity is claimed for Jesus is freely applied to others in the Bible, it ceases to have the slightest force as an argument for his divinity, and if it has, it at the same time proves the divinity of all those to whom it is applied. In short, the plan suggested by the Christian belief should not be depended upon for salvation, for it fails to provide the remedy for sin. On the other hand, it is itself a crime that a man should commit suicide thinking that others would be saved thereby. We can say on oath that Jesus did not offer himself to be crucified, but he was in the hands of his enemies who subjected him to all sorts of cruelties. He prayed to God to save him from the accursed death on the cross and wept the whole night long. Then was he heard because of his righteousness and his prayer was accepted and he was saved from death upon the cross, as appears from the Gospels themselves. It is, therefore, a false accusation against Jesus that he committed suicide by designedly subjecting himself to death. Moreover reason itself condemns the story that Peter should be cured of his headache by Jesus's knocking out his brains. We do admit that Jesus was a servant of God and one of the perfect ones whom God purified with His own hands, but he or any other prophet cannot be made a God on the strength of words spoken of him in any holy book.

As to the teachings contained in the Gospels, we are of opinion that they are imperfect. A perfect code of ethics is that which is calculated to develop all the moral faculties of man and does not lay stress upon one side of human nature only. We assure the gentlemen present that such perfect teaching is contained only in the Holy Quran, for in every matter it adopts the mean path, which is the path of truth and wisdom. For instance, the Gospel says: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." But the Holy Quran does not teach us unconditional forgiveness on all occasions. It directs us to see the occasion first, whether it requires forbearance or revenge, forgiveness



or punishment. It is evident that the latter is the proper course for a man to follow, and its observance necessary for the social life of man. No society can live on the principles taught by the Gospel nor can any Christian society be pointed out which should have ever acted on the turn-to-him-the-other-also text. Again the Gospel says that no one should look "on a woman to lust after her," but the Holy Quran tells us that a man should not unnecessarily look upon other women whether with lust or without lust for this habit will after all make him stumble. On such occasions the Quran requires that a man's eyes should be half-closed, for this is the only way in which a man can remain pure in heart. Perhaps the advocates of a mis-named liberty would object to such a course, but experience shows that this is the only right course. Free intermingling of the two sexes and their freely casting looks at each other, are productive of great mischief and no good has resulted from them. To allow men and women whose hearts are not yet purified, and who are yet under the control of their sensual passions, to freely mingle with, and look at, each other is to intentionally push them down into the pit. The Quranic teaching in this respect is free from every harshness. The same defect of Gospel teaching is brought to light in its directions regarding divorce. The Gospel says that no one should "put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication." But the Holy Quran permits divorce on other equally urgent occasions, for instance when the husband and wife become the deadly enemies of each other and the life of one is in danger from the other, when the wife is guilty of having gone through the preliminaries of fornication, though she may not have actually committed fornication, or when she suffers from some such disease as would endanger life of the husband in case the relations are continued, or when some other cause comes into existence which accounts of its being a hindrance to the continuance of conjugal relations is a sufficient cause for divorce. In all such cases divorce is permitted, and the truth of this principle is practically admitted by the Christians themselves.

To revert to the main point of this lecture, the Christians cannot point out the means which can lead a man to salvation and freedom from the bondage of sin. For, as stated above, salvation means nothing but the attainment



a condition in which a man does not venture upon transgression and his love of God becomes so great to suppress his sensual desires, and the realization of such a state depends upon a perfect knowledge of God. The Holy Quran points out to us the clear ways which can make a man attain to a true knowledge of God and keep him with such fear of Him as keeps him away from sins. By following the Holy Quran a man becomes the recipient of Divine revelation, sees the heavenly signs, receives the knowledge of future from God, has a zeal in his heart for union with God which he prefers to every other connection, receives knowledge from God beforehand of the acceptance of his prayers and a mighty current of Divine knowledge flows in his heart which sweeps away all sinful tendencies before it. But when we go to the Gospel, it points out a method for release from the bondage of sin which is contrary to reason and does nothing to remove the causes of sin.

We will next take the Arya Samaj and consider the means which it proposes for release from the bondage of sin. Here again, as in the case of Christianity, we meet with a plain denial of Divine revelation and heavenly signs, a denial which is based on the authority of Hindu sacred books, the Vedas. It is vain, therefore, to look in this direction for the complete satisfaction which the heart of man finds in the sweet Words of God, the acceptance of his prayers and the manifestation of heavenly signs which reveal to him the face of the living God. But access cannot be had to all these sources of certainty, when a man shall have to depend upon reason only according to the Vedic doctrine. But reason, as shown above, is not a source of perfect certainty and cannot make a man attain the perfect Divine knowledge which is equivalent to seeing God, and which by generating true love and fear of God, burns the chaff of sin, mortifies the sensual passions and working a holy transformation in the life of man, cures all defects and washes away all the impurities of sin. But as most men do not care for the perfect purity of life which frees a man from every stain of sin, therefore they do not even aspire after a holy life, and their hearts are so dead to it that they do not ever feel its need. On the other hand they are ready to fight when the truth is told because of their excessive bias towards a particular set of dogmas.



The position of the Arya Samaj is extremely deplorable. It denies revelation, heavenly signs and acceptance of prayers, the only means to a perfect knowledge of God, and bases the whole superstructure of its belief on the slender basis of reason. But its principles do not hold even when judged from the standpoint of reason. For, as shown above, the only argument for the existence of God that can be derived from the source of reason, is that this universe could not have come into existence of itself and that it must have had a creator. But the Arya Samaj teaches the doctrine that matter and soul are self-existent and eternal and that God has created nothing. Hence the only argument that reason could give for the existence of God fails in view of the principles inculcated by the Arya Samaj. This vital objection against the teachings of the Samaj it is sometimes sought to remove by the assertion that though matter and soul are self-existent, yet the combination of the particles of matter and the union of matter and soul could not be effected without the power of God. But the absurdity of this idea is clear on the face of it, for when it is assumed that the particles of matter and the souls have in them the inherent quality which has made them self-existing and self-supporting from eternity, it is nothing but sheer folly to assert that some external power is needed for their union and combination. To assert first that every particle of matter existing in the universe is with all its qualities a self-existing thing, and that similarly every soul with all its attributes and powers is self-existent, and to deny then that the power of combination in the particles of matter and the power of union in matter and soul belongs to them, is to contradict oneself and no sensible person can hold this position for a single minute. The holder of such a belief is an easy prey for atheism, and it needs very little effort on the part of an atheist to win over an Arya Samajist to his own side. It grieves us much to see that the Arya Samaj has, in formulating its doctrine committed serious errors in both branches of Law. With regard to God the Aryas hold the belief that He is not the Author of the universe and the source from which all blessings flow, but that matter and soul with all the properties and attributes are self-existent and not in any way under obligation to God. If this is true, it is meaningless to acknowledge the existence of God, and even



His existence is assumed, it does not appear why He deserves to be worshipped, on what grounds He is to be taken as the All-powerful Being, and how and by what methods He is to be recognised. Can any one answer these questions? Ah! that there were a heart capable of receiving this message of sympathy. Ah! that some one should sit in the corner of solitude and ponder over these words. Almighty God! Have Thou mercy on these people who are our old neighbours. Turn Thou the hearts of most of them to truth so that they should know it and accept it, for to Thee belongs all power. Amen!

So far as to the error of the Arya Samaj in connection with the recognition of God and His powers, but the other part of Law is also full of errors. Firstly, there is the doctrine of transmigration according to which the soul assumes different bodies in different births. The point which strikes one most in this doctrine is that Almighty God is represented as a most cruel and hard-hearted being whose anger can never be appeased. In the Arya Samajic code of beliefs, God is first shorn of His glory and divested of the power of creation, and then in strange contradiction with it, He is invested with an arbitrary and tyrannical power over the souls to punish them for billions of years for disobedience of commandments to which He has no right to exact obedience. For, if He has not created the souls, He has no absolute right to require them to obey Him. Or assuming that He has acquired such a right, it must at all events be very limited in its scope like the right acquired by a ruler over his subjects. But the interminable series of punishments which every soul has to undergo according to the doctrine of transmigration in one body after another, is absolutely inconsistent with such an acquired right and the principles of justice. According to the Muslim doctrine, not only are soul and matter with their attributes and properties created by the hand of God, but even the punishment which they must receive for disobedience to their Master, does not last for ever. Thus Almighty God says in the Holy Quran with regard to the eternity of the punishment of sinners: "Except in so far as thy Lord willeth, for thy Lord doeth whatever He willeth." Here we are told that though the punishment of the sinners is spoken of as lasting eternally, yet it is not without an



end in the sense in which God is without an end, but only because of its length, and the mercy of God will then overtake them, for He is powerful and does what He wills. This verse is further explained by a tradition according to which the Holy Prophet is reported to have said : "A time will come over hell when there will be no one in it and a cold breeze (of the mercy of God) will blow upon its gates." The Arya Samajic teaching represents the Divine Being as a peevish and revengeful master whose anger can never be appeased. The Christians also entertain the belief that a man shall be condemned to eternal-hell for every sin and that his tortures will know no end. But the wonder is that while proposing endless torture for other men, the son of God is made to bear punishment for three days only. This unrelenting cruelty to others and improper leniency to His own son, is absolutely inconsistent with the mercy and justice of God. Instead of being let off with such a slight torture, the son should have been made to bear the heavier punishment, because being the son of God and as such possessing greater power than mortals, he was the only fit person to bear up under a heavy and never-ending punishment. In short the Christian and the Arya Samajic doctrines are both open to the same objection, while some Mohammadans too are guilty of a departure from the reasonable teaching of the Quran on this point. But the Holy Quran has expressed itself in clear and unequivocal words in the exposition of the doctrine of eternal hell, and hence the blame which attaches to some of its votaries, cannot be laid at its door.

Another objection against the doctrine of transmigration is that it is against true purity. If the mother, sister or daughter of a person dies to-day, she may be reborn to-morrow and in a few years become the wife of the self-same person and thus relations may be contracted which are prohibited by the Vedas. This difficulty which vitiates the purity of the family life cannot be obviated unless the birth of every child is attended with a document containing particulars as to the relations in which it stood to different persons in the previous birth. But since no such arrangement has been made, the upholders of this doctrine shall have to confess that Almighty God Himself is the cause of spreading an evil in this world. But leaving aside these objections, it is difficult to under-



stand what good results from casting souls into the revolution of births, *Mukti* or salvation, as must be admitted by every sensible person, depends upon *gayan*, i.e., Divine knowledge, and if the doctrine of transmigration had any truth in it, the Divine knowledge attained by a soul in a previous birth ought not to have been lost. On the other hand, every fragment of Divine knowledge attained in one birth, should have been a stepping stone for the acquirement of more knowledge and the previous store ought to have been added to the newly acquired one, thus bringing a person nearer and nearer to the fountain of salvation. But it is clear that every child comes into the world utterly ignorant and the previous store of knowledge amassed with great labour during a whole life is utterly wasted like the fortune of a prodigal man. The revolution of successive births, therefore, in no way assists the attainment of salvation, for whatever store of Divine knowledge is accumulated in one birth is utterly wasted in the transition to the next. This process of the gain and loss of knowledge at the beginning and end of each birth, makes the attainment of salvation almost an impossibility, and therefore metempsychosis does not afford the least assistance to such attainment. A really insurmountable difficulty in the way of souls for the attainment of salvation that they must lose everything they gain without any fault of theirs and simply because God has wished to cast them into the maze of transmigration. And in spite of these difficulties, the salvation obtained is temporary and not permanent, and thus after enjoying this hardly won rest for a short time, the soul is again cast out from the abode of bliss to undergo similar revolutions of ceaseless tortures.

The second doctrine owned by the Arya Samaj which strikes at the very root of true purity of life, is the doctrine of *Niyoga*. We do not ascribe this doctrine to the Vedas ; nay, We tremble at the idea of making the Vedas responsible for such a hideous doctrine. We are sure that human nature repels the idea as extremely disgusting that a man should tell his own caste wife who belongs to a respectable and noble family to have connection with a stranger simply for the chance of getting a son, in spite of the continuance of her conjugal relations with her own husband, or that the wife should herself desire to adopt such a shameful course of life. Even some



animals are so jealous of their mates that they do not like their living with other males. It is not my object to enter into any discussion here. We humbly entreat the leaders of the Arya Samaj to renounce this doctrine, because in it lies their moral betterment. The people of this country have already much fallen off from true purity and if practices like the *Niyoga* remain in vogue, the moral degradation of the country would only grow deeper and deeper day by day.

Here We take occasion to express my views on another point of equal importance. Whatever the feeling of hatred which the Arya Samaj entertains towards Muslims and the principles of Islam, it should not make a total departure from the time-honored custom of *purdah*, for such a course would be productive of immense evil and mischief, though it may appear to be attractive at the present moment. Every sensible person can easily understand that the majority of men and women in this age are walking only in obedience to their passions and desires and are so completely in their control that they do not care aught for the retribution of their deeds. Most young men cannot refrain from looking to lust after young and beautiful women if they get a chance to look at them at all, and so is also the case of most women. If in this state when the hearts of both sexes are not free from corruption and evil and are unable to resist the temptations of flesh, a too free intercourse of men and women is allowed, the result would be that the evil of adultery would poison the whole system of society, as is the case in many parts of Europe. But when these men actually grow pure in heart, when they are freed from the control of bestial passions and sensual desires, when the spirit of devil is utterly expelled from among them, when Divine majesty takes entire possession of their hearts and the awe of God controls their looks, in short when a pure transformation is effected in their lives and they don the garments of the fear of God, then, but not till then, they may do what they like, for they would be then as eunuchs made so by the Hand of God and their eyes would be shut against lustful looks and their hearts closed against evil ideas. But remember, our beloved countrymen, may God Himself inspire this idea into your hearts, that this is the most dangerous time for doing away with the custom of *purdah*, and if



you do it, you would sow the seed of poison in your people which would vitiate the whole society. This is a time when the custom of *purdah* ought to have been instituted even if it had never prevailed before, for this is the *kaljug* (the iron age). Evil rages in the world and the transgression of Divine commandments, corruption and drunkenness are at their highest. Atheism prevails in the hearts and the awe of Divine majesty and glory has utterly vanished away from them. Many things are uttered with the tongue with which the heart does not tally. Lectures are delivered which may claim great intellectual merits, but the hearts are dead and devoid of spirituality. It is not meet that at such a time the poor sheep should be let loose in forests where wolves abound.

These are dangerous days with plague, etc., raging and no one can say who would become its morsel by the next year and who remain alive, what house would be devastated and what saved. Arise then and repent, and please your Lord with good and virtuous deeds. Mind that though errors in belief would be punished in the life to come, and the fact of being a Hindu or a Mohamadan or a Christian would be decided on the day of judgment, yet the person who exceeds all limits in his transgressions, evils and injustice to others, will be punished even here, and he cannot flee from the wrath of heaven. Rise then and please your Master and be at peace with Him before the terrible day comes, the day of the raging of plague, of which the prophets of God have prophesied. Reconcile yourselves with your Lord, for He is the most merciful and if you repent truly and forsake the ways of evil, He will forgive you all your sins. A single moment's repentance with a true and fearful heart cancels the evil deeds of seventy years. Do not say that your repentance is not accepted by God. No ! you cannot be saved by your own deeds, it is the grace of God that takes you by the hand and not your own deeds. Merciful and gracious God, show mercy to us for we are Thy servants and bow ourselves at Thy threshold.

#### SALVATION AND THE WAY TO ITS ATTAINMENT.

Every religion that is preached in the world asserts that it points out the way to the attainment of salvation,



but the fact is that most people are utterly ignorant the true significance of salvation. With the Christian salvation indicates nothing more than not being called upon to account for one's sins, but this is not salvation at all. A man may not commit adultery, theft, murder, perjury or any other sin of which he has a knowledge and he may at the same time be as far from the attainment of salvation as possible. The attainment of salvation signifies in fact the attainment of that eternal bliss for which the human soul naturally thirsts and hungers, and which can only be attained when the love of God implanted in man's heart becomes perfect, taking such a deep root that Divine love responds to it, and when a perfect knowledge of, and a perfect union with the Divine Being has been achieved. This eternal bliss men so often seek in erroneous paths which ultimately lead to grief and pain. Some there are who desire to satisfy this craving of the soul for eternal pleasure indulging in the luxuries and transient pleasures of the world, but they soon find out to their heart's great grief that instead of pleasure they have sought pain, and the ways in which they walked, led to their destruction. There are others who seek that pleasure in ranks and titles, but they too remain perfectly ignorant of the great purpose of their lives and end their days in grief and sorrow. Still others there are who for the sake of pleasure amass riches, but whose treasures are only a source of grief to them when they have to part with them. The prime question for the seeker after truth is therefore, how to attain that eternal pleasure and the supreme bliss, and the only criterion of a true religion is that it should lead its follower to that bliss. The guidance afforded to us by the Holy Quran in this respect is that eternal bliss lies only in the true and perfect knowledge of God, in the pure, perfect and personal love of the Divine Being and in a perfect faith in Him, so that the heart should find no rest but in Him. Brief as the words are, they require volumes for their explanation.

The first requirement for the attainment of salvation is, therefore, a true and perfect knowledge of God, for love itself depends upon knowledge. We cannot love a thing of which we have no knowledge, or if we love a thing with an erroneous knowledge of it, our love is misdirected. Our love of God increases with o



knowledge of Him. The two incentives to love are beauty and goodness, and, therefore, so long as a man has not perfect knowledge of Divine beauty and Divine goodness, his love towards God can never be perfect. The person, who has a certain knowledge of the majestic beauty of the Divine Being and who knows also with certainty how unbounded is the goodness of God towards His creatures, has a new life and energy granted to his love for the Divine Being which is implanted in nature within his heart. It is when a man is fed in the source of Divine beauty and goodness that he sees Him with an unparalleled love and considers not to be His equal. It is not with his tongue only that he admits the Unity of God then, but in practice too he considers him as one and without any associate. The seed of Divine love is, no doubt, sown from the beginning, to grow it needs the nourishment of Divine knowledge, for unless a man has knowledge of the beauties of the object he cannot be drawn towards it as a lover. The loves of God can, therefore, never arise in a heart which has no knowledge of Divine beauty and goodness. But when a man's knowledge of God becomes perfect, and he realizes the Divine beauty and goodness in all their splendour and perfection, a flame of the fire of Divine love then descends upon his heart. Then the human soul falls down upon the threshold of Divine glory with the lover's true submission, and undergoes a mighty transformation being entirely purged of all kinds of dross and impurities. But this stage is reached only when a man not only knows but also realizes that the God Whom he worships is the possessor of every excellence, beauty and glory which the mind of a man can conceive and whose goodness is perfect and unbounded, and hence the first step in the attainment of salvation is the attainment of a true knowledge of God, and a man's advancement in this path, that is to say, his spiritual advancement, depends upon his progress and perfection in his knowledge of God.

The question which naturally arises here is, what is attained by a true knowledge of God? Our answer to this question is that we should recognise God as absolutely perfect in His unity, power, knowledge, and every other beauty and attribute. A defect in Divine unity is supplied not only by associating anything else with



God, as is done by the worshippers of idols, phenomena of nature, fire, water, the sun, the moon, Jesus, Krishna, etc., but also by looking upon one's resources as having an efficacy independently of God. The Holy Quran speaks of men "who take their desires for their *ilah*, i.e., God." It is Islam only that teaches a perfect Unity of God (a) as admitted even by European writers, the upholders of the theocratic religion. Christianity also claims to have a Unity in Trinity, but the truth is that it believes only in Trinity and its claim to a belief in Unity is simply preposterous so long as it holds the Son and the Holy Ghost to be two persons of godhead along with God the father as the third. The puzzle of Unity in Trinity was simply introduced to escape the charge of *shirk* or setting up gods with God which all the prophets denounced as the most horrible sin, but the Christians can never clear themselves of this grave charge so long as they look upon one born of a woman as their God in whom they place all their reliance. Thus Christianity fails at the very outset to impart a true knowledge of God to man because it leads him farther off from the recognition of Divine Unity by inculcating the godhead of two other persons besides God. But as without true and perfect knowledge of God, true love of God can never be entertained, it follows that salvation in the sense of having a communion with God cannot be attained by following the principles and doctrines of Christianity.

The second requirement of a man's true knowledge of God is that the power and knowledge of God should be considered perfect and defectless. Judging the various religions on this principle, we see that no religion except Islam can give a man a true and perfect knowledge of the Divine Being. The Holy Quran recognises the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God repeatedly while the doctrines inculcated by most other religions attribute defectiveness to both the power and knowledge of the Divine Being and place limitations upon them. There is the Arya Samaj, for instance, a newly arisen of Hinduism, which teaches that God is not the Creator. This doctrine it teaches on the authority of the Vedas, which according to it, teach that God and matter are three self-existent beings, and that God had nothing to do with the creation of soul and matter.



This doctrine implies that the power, knowledge and unity of God are all defective. For, if matter and soul with all their properties are not the creation of the hand of God, there is no reason to believe that God has knowledge of all their hidden properties. On the other hand, with such a doctrine as the basis of one's belief in God, there is reason to believe that God has no knowledge of the hidden properties of soul and matter because these were never made by Him. The doctrine, therefore, strikes at the root of Divine Omniscience and with such belief the true knowledge of God can never be attained. But if we recognise God as the Creator of the Universe, of matter as well as of soul, we also recognise His Omniscience for what was made by His own hand could not remain unknown to Him. And if God is unaware of the hidden properties of soul and matter, He cannot be supposed to know even the laws governing the universe or these laws rest on these properties. We may choose one of the two courses, *viz.*, either consider God as the Creator of matter and soul and all their properties and the logical consequence of this belief is that we look upon God as an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being, or we may believe that matter and soul with all properties were never made by God, but that they are co-existent and co-eternal with God, and in that case we must further admit that not being the author of these things, we cannot have a perfect knowledge of these things or their hidden properties. If God did not create matter and soul and these two are uncreated, eternal, and self-existent like God they do not depend for their existence upon God, and even if God be supposed to be non-existent, still matter and soul would not suffer in any way thereby.

The Holy Quran, on the other hand, tells us that Almighty God is *hayy* and *qayyum*. The first of these names signifies that He is the living one and the giver of life to all, or the self-existent and the bringer of all things into existence. The second name indicates that He is the self-subsistent one by whom all things subsist. These two names have in fact a connection which cannot be broken. For, only those things can be said to subsist by God which owe their existence to Him; and a thing which was not brought into existence by Him cannot be said to subsist by Him. A thing which came



into existence of itself must subsist by itself, but a thing which owes its existence to God needs His subsistence or support implies that without it the things would cease to exist, where as when we say that a thing came into existence without any agency, it is implied that it can exist without any external support or subsistence. Hence those who believe that matter and soul came into existence of themselves and do not owe their existence to God, must also believe that matter and soul are not in any way dependent upon God in the continuity of their existence. This dissevers all connections of the soul with God and leaves it quite independent of Him, for it can live without Him. A God who cannot have knowledge of the hidden and minute properties of soul and matter and without whom soul and matter would be as well as ever does not deserve to be called a God.

Again, as was said in the beginning, salvation lies in the pure and perfect love which the soul entertains towards God, the seed of this love being implanted in the soul by the hand of God from the very beginning. For if the love of God were not a natural attribute of the soul, in it could not lie the highest bliss and supreme pleasure of the soul. But if Almighty God is not the Creator of soul, the love of God cannot be one of its natural attributes, for its existence is in that case quite independent of Him. Salvation itself is impossible in that case, for salvation implies the growth of the seed Divine love which is sown from the beginning in the human soul, into a perfect state, but when the existence of the seed is denied, which is a necessary consequence of the doctrine of the self-existence of soul, there can be no growth and consequently no salvation. The love of God in such a case is an accident and not a natural quality of the soul, and it cannot, therefore, be its highest goal. The Holy Quran refers to it in vii : 171, in the following words : " Almighty God said to the souls, ' am I not your Lord ? ' They replied ; ' yes, Thou art. " The reply of the souls acknowledging the Lordship of God is in fact their natural response showing that obedience to God and love of Him are implanted in the soul from the beginning by God Himself who is its maker. The testimony of the soul that God is its Creator is a testimony which very nature affords,



and consequently the love of that Creator is also sown in it from the very beginning. In another verse, the Holy Quran calls the faculty of seeking God and finding one's true pleasure in Him as a natural property of the soul with which God has created mankind (xxx : 29). And since our own souls testify to the truth of what the Holy Quran tells us, *viz.*, that though we seek pleasure lies only in God, and it is in union with Him only that we find that bliss and rest which men are seeking day and night elsewhere, hence we are certain that God is the Creator of our souls and that He Himself has implanted the seed of His own love within our souls. In short, the love which the soul naturally has for God is a clear testimony that God created our souls, and the natural love of our souls for Him is inexplicable on any other ground. But if it be supposed that our souls are not connected with God by the tie of creation their supreme pleasure cannot in that case be in the love of God and hence the impossibility of salvation according to this belief.

The true fountain of salvation is the soul's natural love for God which makes it attain the union of God, for the true lover cannot remain separate from his beloved one. And as God Himself is light, His love gives birth to the light of salvation. On the one hand, the love which is implanted in the nature of man draws the love of God towards it, and, on the other, the love of God for man gives a new impulse to man's love for God, and when these two loves meet together, *fana* or a spiritual annihilation is brought about, and this is followed by *baga billah* or a life in God, in which every veil which hides the face of God and every hinderance which separates man from God is removed and Divine love pervades the soul. It is this annihilation of self, followed by a truly spiritual life, that is mistaken by the Buddhists for an annihilation of both body and soul after which there is no existence. It is the first stage of perfection in spiritual growth and unless the spiritual wayfarer passes through it he cannot attain the goal. But here his own efforts end, for it is the last stage in the path of human efforts to attain the goal. After annihilation a new life is granted to the spiritual wayfarer by the grace that the Holy Quran refers in the prayer which it teaches the Muslims, as it says in the verse ; " O Lord ! show



us the right path, the path of those whom Thou has blessed by Thy grace." It shows that the stage of new life is reached only through the grace of God and through one's efforts. It is the fruit of Divine love which grants an everlasting life to man and frees him from death. Everlasting life does not belong by right to any one except God, for He alone lives for ever and ever. From among men, therefore, only to him is granted eternal life who frees himself entirely from the love of others and being engrossed in Divine love and thus completely annihilated gets a new life through the grace of God. It is improper to call such a one a dead person for he leads a life in God. They are dead who being estranged from God are spiritually dead. It is to this that the Holy Quran refers when it says: "Verily he who comes to God and he is cut off from Him, for him is hell in which he will neither die nor live." These two statements which seem to be apparently contradictory are based on one of the highest spiritual truths. The man who is cut off from God, who has done nothing to make the seed of Divine love which was implanted in his heart by God Himself grow in him, will be in a state which is neither death nor life. He does not die because he is created for worshipping God eternally and, therefore, it is necessary that he should live, but he cannot be said to be living because true life is attained through union with God in which he has deprived himself by estranging himself from God. It is this eternal life that salvation signifies and it can only be attained through love of, and union with God. Had other people possessed true knowledge of spiritual life they would never have promulgated such blasphemous doctrines as that God is not the Creator of soul and matter and that these things have eternal spiritual life like God Himself. The truth is that true knowledge is only gained through inspiration from God for it relates to heavenly things and only he who is cut off from the heavenly source can have access to it.

There is another defect in the Arya Samaj or Hindu doctrine of salvation which may be mentioned in this connection. It is held by the upholders of the doctrine of self-existence and eternity of soul and matter that salvation is granted to the souls only temporarily. Permanent salvation according to them is impossible, for if it were granted, it would be possible for all the exist-



souls at some time to obtain salvation and leave God without any material to work upon on account of His inability to bring new souls into existence. It is to avoid this difficulty that the doctrine of temporary salvation is resorted to. In other words, it is held that even the saints after having attained to a state of salvation shall be deprived of that bliss and again made to wander in an endless course of transmigration. This means that Almighty God is pleased to inflict pain upon His servants and does not like them to remain in eternal bliss. The Christian doctrine of salvation has a similar defect, for though it promises eternal bliss to the worshippers of Jesus, it threatens the deniers of the divinity of Jesus with a never-ending punishment. It is the Holy Quran which teaches the only reasonable doctrine on this point, for it gives hope even to the unbelievers that the salvation which they have themselves rejected in this life shall ultimately be granted to them by the mercy of God. Both the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet state this in clear words. A tradition in the Sahih Muslim says: "A time will come over hell when there shall be none in it and the cold breeze (of Divine mercy) will shake its gates." The Holy Quran refers to this subject in xi : 109, 110, where it speaks of the blessings of paradise as "an uninterrupted boon," but in speaking of those in hell it adds: "But if thy Lord wills it otherwise (*i. e.*, to take them out of hell), (He shall do it) for thy Lord is the mighty worker of His will." This is the only teaching which is in accordance with perfect Divine attributes. There are Divine attributes of glory and Divine attributes of beauty, and as God inflicts the punishment, He also applies the ointment. It is not true that those in hell shall eternally be subject to a manifestation of the Divine attribute of wrath, and that the Divine attribute of mercy shall never take them under its protection. Of course it is not meant that those thus delivered from hell shall be on a par with the elect in the bliss which they shall enjoy, for those who have chosen the side of God in this very life and completely annihilated their own selves in the love of God shall attain to the high stages of salvation which the others shall never be able to attain to. Moreover it should be borne in mind that the chief attribute of God is mercy, and His wrath is really only a manifestation of this attribute which



takes place for the purpose of setting something right, and when that is done, mercy again appears in its own form. It is with this attribute of mercy that the Holy Quran opens, as the names *Rahman*, the most merciful, and *Rahim*, the most compassionate, testify. Almighty God is not pleased by inflicting punishment upon His own creatures and he does not wrong any body, but men injure their own souls for in His love is true salvation and in estrangement from Him real pain.

If we take Christianity, we find it also deficient in giving a true and perfect knowledge of God which we have seen to be the first step in the attainment of salvation. The Christians look upon Jesus as their God, but Jesus was neither Omniscient nor Omnipotent, and hence according to the Christian teaching, Omnipotence and Omniscience are wanting in God. Jesus used to fly from his enemies and to hide himself from them, he was arrested and cast into prison, scourged and nailed to the cross. Omnipotence is not consistent with such disgrace. Jesus did not know the future for he admitted that even the Son knew not the time of the hour of judgment. Such ignorance strikes at the root of Omniscience. Moreover, an Omnipotent Being could not be led to the extremity of committing a suicide for the salvation of mankind or a portion of it. And again, the theory that God remained dead for three days is at least as preposterous as the doctrine of Trinity itself. And wonder of wonders that though God remained dead for three days, yet his creatures did not suffer in the least by his death and lived as well without him as during his life.

The greatest error that Christianity has made is its introduction of the doctrine of Trinity into the pure montheistic teaching of the Jewish religion. It is a doctrine which strikes at the root of Divine Unity, and makes the attainment of a true and perfect knowledge of God impossible. The three gods of Christianity are the father, the son and the holy ghost. In order to make this doctrine look unlike the polytheism of heathen nations, it is further asserted that the three gods named above are only one God, but this assertion is too absurd to need any refutation. So long as men are men and have heads on their shoulders, they cannot be convinced that  $1+1+1=1$ . Even mission colleges and schools do



not teach an arithmetic which contains such a rule of addition. Three perfect and eternal Gods, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, are three Gods and they cannot be one, and if God is one, then there cannot be three. The doctrine of Trinity is rejected alike by the Holy Quran and the Old Testament. The law that was revealed to Moses does not contain any trace of the doctrine of Trinity, and the Unity of God was preached by all the prophets that appeared among the Israelites. The truth is that even the Gospels do not teach the doctrine of Trinity, and none of the sayings of Jesus reported in the Gospels contains the slightest trace of this erroneous doctrine. As a matter of fact, Paul and not Jesus is responsible for introducing the doctrine of Trinity into the Christian system. Paul borrowed it from the Greeks and in fact made a sort of compromise with the heathen in order to swell the number of Christians. In India too we find a trinity of very ancient origin which is called *Tri-murti*, and like the three Divine persons of Christianity, we have the three gods in the Hindu triad, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Like their brethren in India, the Greeks had also a trinity of gods. The number *three* had for this reason acquired a sanctity among them, and played a part in most of their religious ceremonies. The one object of Paul was to gain adherents to the system which he preached, and for this purpose he did not hesitate to sacrifice the fundamental principle of the religion which Christ taught and which was in fact the same which Moses had taught. The Greeks had in their turn borrowed the doctrine of Trinity from the Egyptians among whom we find the very three names of gods as are given by the Christians to the three persons of their Trinity. Thus the oracle of Serapis is said to have given the following answer to Thulius, a great monarch, who asked if any one was greater than he: "First God, afterward the Word, and with them the Holy Spirit, all these are of the same nature and make but *one* whole, of which the power is eternal." Here we see clearly the original of the "Word" in John, the second person of Trinity. Plato also taught that the *Logos* was the second God, which is also called *the first-born son of God*. There is no doubt, therefore, that Paul introduced the doctrine of Trinity in imitation of the Greeks in order to make Christianity more acceptable to the polytheists and idol-worshippers. The



teaching of Jesus concerning the person of God was very simple like the teachings of all the prophets, and he taught the simple doctrine of the unity of God, and modern Christianity is not the religion of Christ, but the religion of Paul. Jesus never taught Trinity so long as he lived, and after him his brother James remained true to his doctrine. But Paul opposed him and introduced many innovations into the Christian religion. He not only dispensed with the Mosaic law, but most arrogantly called it a curse and taught that the blood of Jesus wiped off all the sins and that a belief in the atonement was sufficient for salvation. Jesus was that meek and lowly man who did not like to be called "good" even, but Paul went to the extremity of calling him God. The words which Jesus spoke when he was nailed to the cross, saying "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me," are a very clear evidence of his pure monotheistic belief. A man who finding himself thus in utter distress calls upon his only refuge, the Lord God whom he considers his only deliverer, cannot, consistently with this utterance be supposed to have ever asserted that he himself was the all-powerful God who ruled earth and heavens. As regards certain words used of him in the Gospels, it should be borne in mind that Almighty God often addresses such of His chosen servants as have the purest connections of love with Him in words which the ignorant take literally and fall into errors, whereas such words are used only metaphorically.

In short, Paul was the man who gave to Christianity a new turn of life and novel doctrines, while James, the brother of Jesus, the recognised chief of the Apostles at Jerusalem, remained faithful to the Mosaic law. Paul legalised all the prohibitions contained in the law and made Christianity approach the Greek idolatry as near as he could. He was a deadly enemy of Jesus during his life, but after his death he became a convert to Christianity, the basis of his change of faith being alleged to be some personal grudge against the Jews. On his way to Damascus he had a vision according to the Christians, after which he found himself a convert to Christianity. Thus it was at Damascus that the erroneous doctrines of Trinity and the divinity and atonement of Jesus took root. Jesus never said that one of his apostles would come after his death, nor did he ever say of Paul that



Notwithstanding his determined enmity to him in his life time, Paul would rise to the dignity of an apostle after his crucifixion. Paul had an ingenious brain and seeing the vacancy caused in the apostles by the apostacy of Judas Iscariot, he advanced his claim to be the twelfth apostle or the apostle of the Gentiles on the basis of an alleged vision which he saw on his way to Damascus. As a matter of fact, this apostle of Jesus Christ proved even worse than the one whose place he filled, for Judas Iscariot only betrayed his master, but Paul struck at the very root of the principles which Jesus had taught and thus gave a much severer blow to Christianity than Judas.

It would appear from the above that the true knowledge of God which is necessary for salvation cannot be obtained otherwise than by following the Islamic teaching. Next to knowledge the love of God is essential for salvation for no one likes to punish him who loves him. Love is always reciprocal, and the love of one person for another attracts the love of the latter for the former, though he may not have even given expression to his love. This is the secret of the attraction witnessed in the prophets of God. People are drawn to them with a mighty magnetism and they love them to such an extent that they do not hesitate even to sacrifice their lives for them. The reason of this attraction is that the prophets have love and sympathy for mankind greater than the love and sympathy which a mother has for her children. They offer every hardship only for the sake of others. The magnetic power of their love shows at last its effect, and capable hearts are inexplicably drawn towards them. If then even man responds to man's love for man, why not God who knows the secrets of the heart. Love shows wonders. Its fire burns the chaff of sin and eats away the flame of transgression. There can be no punishment where there is true, pure and perfect love. One of the signs of true love is that the lover has it impressed in his very nature that separation from the beloved one is fatal for him. He is certain that if he departs in the least from the right path, perdition will overtake him, and any opposition to his beloved one he considers a poison for himself. He is ever restless to attain union with the object of his love. Adultery, theft, murder, perjury, &c., which



are considered to be transgressions of Divine commandments by ordinary men, are not the only sins for him, but the least indifference to God and the slightest regard for others he considers to be a heinous sin. It is for this reason that he resorts to *istighfar* continually, and prays to God day and night for his protection and support. As he cannot bear separation from God even for an instant, he is always anxious to seek His pleasure. There is a thirst in his soul that God should be pleased with him and hence he is never tired of praying for Divine protection. The spring of love within him constantly gushes forth afresh and hence he becomes more and more anxious to advance in the attainment of Divine pleasure. Hence the more a man loves God, the more he resorts to *istighfar* and seeks the protection of God. This is the reason that the righteous servants of God who have a perfect love for Him constantly resort to *istighfar*, and this is in fact a criterion by which the sinlessness of a man can be determined. The true and primary meaning of *istighfar* is only this that a man prays to God to save him from stumbling on account of the natural human weakness. Its meaning is then extended to cover the cases in which a man prays to God to save him in this life and the next from the evil consequences and poisonous effect of the evil deeds which he has already done. The true fountain of salvation is therefore, love for God, and this love on account of a man's continual prayers and supplications draws God's love towards it. When a man's love for God is perfect and the fire of his love burns all his lower desires, the flame of Divine love then descends upon his heart of a sudden and draws him out of all the impurities of a worldly life, and Divine purity overshadows all the phases of his life.

This high stage in spiritual growth may be reached and the Divine blessings consequent thereupon received even now as they were in the past, for the Divine attributes of love and mercy never lie idle and Divine blessings are never withheld. To the man who makes an effort in His path and walks in righteousness, God grants these gifts now as he granted them before. Such a promise is contained in the Holy Quran even in the prayer which the Muslims are taught to repeat in their daily prayers and which says : " O God, sh



the right path, the path of those upon whom have been Thy grace and blessings." It tells us to pray for all the blessings and gifts which were granted to the prophets of God and His righteous servants, thus showing that the Muslims are not deprived of these Divine blessings. It gives the Muslims mighty hopes which were not given to the former people. The blessings of God were granted variously to the various prophets appearing in different ages and countries, but the Muslims are taught to pray for, and may thus hope to receive, all these blessings combined. It is for this reason that the Holy Quran calls the Muslims "the best of people" raised for the guidance of mankind, for greater excellences and blessings were in store for them. The reason of this special Divine favour upon the Muslims is that the Holy Prophet Mohammad whom they follow man from the beginning, and the remedy to counteract the effect of the poison is within him and was not introduced into the world by some special act which the nature of man knows not. To say that the world knew not this remedy till two thousand years ago a certain man was crucified is not only a denial of the justice of God but also an insult to human reason. Almighty God created the antidote along with the poison, and this antidote is the love of God, which can become perfect only through a true and perfect knowledge of God.

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### SACRIFICE AND SALVATION.

We do not mean to discuss under this heading how sacrifice has occupied a place in the world's history, which is closely connected with the idea of salvation or forgiveness of sins. Our object is to show what kind of sacrifice Islam requires of us for our salvation, and whether there is any other form of sacrifice which can lead to the attainment of that end. The external act of sacrifice in Islam is regarded as a deed done in obedience to the will of God, for his pleasure, and to attain his nearness. It is in commemoration of the wonderful obedience shown by Abraham to the commandments of God, and is a symbolical act showing that the doer of it submits himself completely to the Will of God, and is, like Abraham, ready to sacrifice everything for His sake.



The Holy Quran says expressly with regard to sacrifices : " Their flesh will never reach to God, not yet their blood, but the piety from you will reach Him. " That sacrifice in Islam has this double significance, viz., that it is an external act of worship with the deeper significance of the inward submission of the soul, is apparent from the words used for sacrifice in the Arabic language. Thus one word for sacrifice is *qurban* (derived from *qurb*, meaning nearness), because it brings into the nearness and presence of God the man who sacrifices with sincerity, faith and true obedience to Him. Similarly sacrifice is termed *nasika*, which is derived from the root meaning to worship and to obey. The use of such words for sacrifice as denote actually and primarily obedience, worship and nearness of God, is clearly suggestive of the fact that the true worshipper of God is the man who sacrifices his own self, all his faculties and the objects of his love and desires in the way of God and to seek His pleasure, and whose passions and desires are all crushed down and swept of so as to be completely annihilated. Any one who reflects over the double significance of these words, cannot fail to see that according to Islam the essence of sacrifice is worship and true worship requires a sacrifice, the slaughtering of the *nafs-i-ammara* or the disobedient soul which leads a man away from God, the cutting off of all connections besides the connection of God and a submission to the hardest trials. Unless this sacrifice is performed by a person, he cannot be called a true worshipper of God, and is not delivered from the death of remissness. Such is also the significance of *Islam*, viz., a complete submission to the Will of God, which requires a sacrifice of all besides. The true *Muslim* is, therefore, the person who submits himself wholly to God, and whose passions and desires are all subjected to death. Sacrifices in Islam are, in short, a symbol of the sacrifice of self, a remembrance to keep this object fresh in the mind, a step to lead men to it, and a preparation for the attainment of the spiritual reality which is hidden under it.

Such is the sacrifice which Islam requires of a person for the attainment of salvation. It teaches us that true purity of life cannot be attained except by the sacrifice of a man's own self—a sacrifice which is cleanse



with the water of sincerity and purged with the fire of faith and perseverance. The Holy Quran expresses it in the following words: "the person who submits his ownself to God and devotes his life to His ways and the deeds of righteousness, shall be granted his reward from the fountain of the nearness of God, and they have no fear or grief." This is the sacrifice of self which the Holy Quran teaches us. The person who devotes all his faculties to the way of God, and whose words, deeds and movements are all for the sake of God, is deemed to have attained salvation, for he is spoken of as having got his reward from God and as having been delivered from every fear and grief. The idea which is conveyed here in the word *Islam* is expressed elsewhere in the Holy Quran by the word *istiqamat*. Thus in the *Sura Fatiha* the Muslims are taught to pray as follows: "Make as firm in the path of *istiqamat* (perseverance), the path of those who have received blessings from Thee, and to whom the doors of heaven have been opened." It should be borne in mind that Almighty God has created man for Himself, and therefore, since obedience to, and the worship of, God, is the object of his creation, he cannot be said to have attained to *istiqamat*, or to be on the right way to the attainment of this object, unless he makes himself wholly for God; and when he does it Divine blessings are then certainly granted to him, which is, in other words, a life of purity. If a window is opened towards the sun, the rays of light will at once find their way into the room. So also with man. When he makes himself wholly for God and walks straightly in His path, so that every screen is removed which hides God from him, a flame of light at once descends upon him, which illumines his heart and purges it of every internal dross. He is then a new man and undergoes a mighty transformation. Such a person is said to have attained a life of purity and it is in this world that such a life commences. The Holy Quran says: "The person who remains blind in this world and to whom no light is granted to see God here, shall also be blind in the next world." The senses with which God is recognised are granted in this world, and the person who remains destitute of them here, shall remain in eternal darkness, for his faith is based on hearsay and not on sure and solid facts. In short, there is



only one way to purity of life and actual salvation, and that is, as the Holy Quran has taught us, that we should made ourselves wholly for God and bow down, with true submission and perfect sincerity, at the Divine threshold, and not deviate a step from the path of God though we should be cut to pieces. In fact we should be willing to seal our faith in the true God with our blood. It is for this reason that Almighty God has called our holy faith by the name of Islam, so that it may signify our complete submission and resignation to God, which is, in other words, a sacrifice of our own self.

Such is the relation between sacrifice and salvation according to the teachings of the Holy Quran. Against this the Christians have sent up another sort of sacrifice, which they think to be necessary for the salvation of man. According to the Christian doctrine, a man's salvation does not depend upon the sacrifice of his own self, which is, in other words, his complete submission to the Divine Being ; but all men are saved by the sacrifice of Jesus whom they suppose to have taken away the sins of the whole world. God sacrificed His only son for the sake of the sinners, and the value of this sacrifice was enhanced by the consideration that Jesus was an only son. This was the crowning deed of God's love towards mankind, and this is the only way of salvation. The question before us is, therefore, to judge the comparative value of the two sorts of sacrifice. For this, we should first consider the nature of sin and its remedy. Sin is, in fact, a position which is generated in the human heart when it is devoid of the sincere love and loving remembrance of God and remiss in obedience to Him. When a tree is rooted out from the ground, it begins to wither and its greenness begins to vanish away, for it is no more supplied with the juice which afforded it nourishment. The person whose heart is rooted out from the love of God, begins in a like manner to wither away spiritually and is affected with spiritual aridity which is a sinful state of mind. The laws of nature point out to us three sorts of remedy ; viz., (1), the love of God ; (2), *istighfar*, which means a desire to hide and cover, for so long as the roots of a tree are covered under ground, there is hope of a flourishing growth of it ; and (3), *tauba* (repentance),



*i.e.*, a turning to God with humility and submission to draw the water of life, to bring one's self nearer to Him, and to tear out the veils of disobedience with the help of deeds of virtue. *Tauba* does not consist in the utterance of certain words with the tongue, but it is made perfect only when a man turns away from the course of vice to the path of virtue. In fact every righteous deed is a step for the perfection of repentance, for the object of it is to attain a nearness to God which, in the terminology of the Holy Quran, is called *tauba*. Our prayer to God it is also *tauba*, because through it also we seek the nearness of God. Almighty God having created the soul of man called it *ruh* (lit., joy or happiness and relief from grief or sorrow), for its true happiness and rest from grief and sorrow lay in the confession of God and in His love and obedience. He also called it *nafs* (lit., a thing's self), for He endowed it with a capacity to attain oneness with God. The man that has true connection with God is like the tree that is firmly rooted in the ground. Such deep connection with the Divine Being is, in fact, a paradise for man. As the growth of the tree depends upon the nourishment which it draws from the earth by means of its roots, so the spiritual progress of a man depends upon the close connection of his heart with God, which being fed from the source of love, is granted strength to cast off the poisonous matter of sin. Thus being in God, it grows in purity and freedom from corruption, ramifies in pleasant greenness and verdure, and yields goodly fruit. But the heart that is not connected with God, is not fed from this source of nourishment and gradually withers away until all the leaves having fallen down, it has an ugly aspect. Since the dryness of sin arises from the absence of connection with God, therefore the natural and certain remedy for it is a firm and deep connection with the Divine Being, as the laws of nature point out. With reference to this same connection Almighty God says in the Holy Quran: "O thou soul that art at rest and retest fully contented with God, return to thy Lord, thou being pleased with Him and He pleased with thee, so enter among my servants and enter into my paradise."

In short, sin is the result of separation from God, and therefore the only remedy for it, as every sensible



person must see, is connection with, and love for, God. How the suicide of one person can have the effect of doing away with separation and bringing about the connection with God, is beyond the comprehension of human understanding. It is risibly absurd that a person should knock out his brains out of pity for another who is suffering from headache, or commit suicide because another is dying. No sensible person would ever consider such suicide to be an act of genuine human sympathy, for it only brings to end the life of one without so much as doing a particle of good to the other. Even if taken out of sympathy, such a step only shows that the person has not the power to assist the other out of the difficulty and therefore puts an end to his own life in despair. Sympathy with our fellow-beings is, no doubt, a praiseworthy and noble quality, and to suffer pains and face difficulties for the good and benefit of others is truly the business of great and magnanimous men, but the way in which Jesus is said to have committed suicide, cannot be regarded as sympathetical by any sane person. Had Jesus refrained from the commission of suicide, and suffered for his people in a reasonable manner, like other great men, he would, no doubt, have laid humanity under a deep obligation by his magnanimous and sympathetic deeds. For instance, if a poor man stands in need of a house and has not the wherewithal to build it, it would be a supremely sympathetical deed on the part of mason to build it for him without being paid, and the poor man would, no doubt, be under a deep obligation to him for his having taken so much trouble for his comfort ; but, what would it avail the poor man if moved by pity and sympathy for him, a person were to knock his head against a stone. Ah ! there are very few in the world who are guided by reason in doing alleged deeds of virtue, and in exercising their compassion and sympathy for their fellow-beings. If it is true that Jesus really committed suicide under the misconception that others would be delivered by his death, he is to be pitied, and this event instead of being made public, must be kept secret.

The question of the sacrifice of Jesus may be discussed from another point of view. It is admitted



that Jesus bore the curses of numerous sinners. We are sorry to say that by the recognition of this principle the Christians are guilty of a gross attack upon the righteousness of the prophet whom they follow. It is the Christian belief that Jesus was actually subjected to the *la'nat* (curse) of God, and the severity of this blasphemy against him is hardly palliated by excuse that the curse was removed after three days. The sacrifice of Jesus is useless if he was not really subjected to curse, and therefore curse is the foundation-stone of the superstructure of Christian belief. But the Christians have formulated this doctrine without considering the results to which it naturally leads. Curse (*la'nat*) is not a meaningless word. It has a certain effect; and when curse is attributed to a person, that is to say, when it is stated of him that he is subject to the curse of God, it is really meant that the effect of curse is upon him, for otherwise the world would not convey any significance at all; as a matter of fact, curse (Ar. *la'nat*) is an expression of a particular state of mind. A person is said to be subject to curse when his heart is turned away from God so as to become an enemy of the Divine Being. Hence Satan is called *la'in*, or the accursed one. *La'nat* conveys the idea of casting out from one's presence or nearness, and the word is, therefore, applied to a person whose heart is removed farthest off from the love and obedience of God, and in which instead of love a hatred of the Divine Being is generated. Such a person is hateful to God, and is under His wrath. If, as asserted by the Christians, Jesus was subjected to Divine curse—though it were for three days, or even a shorter period—it must follow, as a natural consequence, that the curse carried with it its effect and that consequently Jesus actually incurred the wrath of God, that his heart became quite foreign to the love, obedience and knowledge of God, that he became the enemy of God and God became his enemy, that he became hateful to God and God became hateful to him, and that being cast out from God's presence, he was devoted to destruction. According to the Christian doctrine then, we must entertain the abhorrent belief that Jesus, and righteous prophet of God, did not actually believe in God, nay hated and abhorred God, and became an enemy of Him, and a friend of Satan for the



three days that the curse remained in force. Nor can this conclusion be escaped so long as the sacrifice of Jesus is interpreted in the Christian sense, *i.e.*, as a sacrifice for sinners, whose sins were borne away by him. Sin means the disobedience of God and curse, *i.e.*, hatred and wrath of the Divine Being, is a consequence of it. God denounced his curse against the serpent which seduced Eve, which means that He hated him, cast him out from His presence, and turned in wrath against him. Cain was also cursed by God, because he had been guilty of the sin of shedding the blood of his brother, Abel; in other words, "he was devoted to destruction, cast out from God's presence, . . . . . and wandered . . . . . by reasons of the trouble and perplexity of his conscience," so say the Christian interpreters. Accordingly, if Jesus took away the sins he took the consequences of the sins also; for otherwise the taking away of sins is meaningless talk. In fact this is admitted by the Christians in the formula of their faith that Jesus was cursed for the sake of the sinners. But the consequences of sin, as already stated and as admitted on all hands, are the wrath, displeasure, hatred and enmity of God, being cast out from Divine presence, and being in association with Satan. According to the Christian conception of Jesus' sacrifice therefore, Jesus' mind must be supposed to have experienced all these states. But such an ascription to a righteous servant of God is the most hateful idea, and no God-fearing Christian would propose for Jesus the abhorrent appellations of the enemy of God and friend of Satan, though such enmity and friendship may have lasted for three seconds, to say nothing of three days. If therefore Jesus did not take the consequences of sin, he did not take away the sins, and the supposed sacrifice is without any effect at all.

From the above it would appear that since the heart of Jesus was never actually subjected to curse, therefore his supposed sacrifice is simply an innovation of ignorant men; ignorant because they invented a doctrine highly derogatory to the dignity and sanctity of their own prophet inasmuch as it makes him a hater and an enemy of God. Cursed is the salvation which cannot be attained unless a righteous servant of God is subjected to curse and believed to be an enemy of God and a friend



of Satan. It should have been far better for the Christians to have preferred to go to hell rather than propose the ignoble title of Satan for a righteous servant of God. With such impurities in their heart, it is strange to find them crying for salvation. A person is first raised to the height of being called a son of God, and is described as one with God and proceeding from Him and is then brought down to the disgraceful depth of being designated as a friend of Satan. For, it should be borne in mind that the effect of subjecting Jesus to curse is nothing less than make him partake of Satanic qualities. The idea that one has taken away their sins, may, no doubt, be pleasing to men who are ignorant of the true purity of life, but its grotesqueness becomes only too evident when it is considered that to accept it as true, is really to condemn a righteous servant of God as disobeying, hating and denying God. And we are asked to believe that the mission of Jesus fulfilled this hateful idea. Mark the mighty difference between the purity of the noble Islamic doctrine which requires that, in order to attain salvation, every man should obey and love his God with his whole heart and soul and completely resign himself to His will, and the impurity of the Christian doctrine, which not only rejects the requirement of the internal purity of soul, but requires in addition that a holy man of God and one of His righteous servants should be considered as an enemy of God and accursed like the Arcnfend, that common enemy of the human race. A deplorable error has arisen in Christianity ; but it seems to be too deeply rooted to be plainly rejected when its harm and mischief are pointed out. It is sad to find that the whole scheme of salvation has been made by the Christians to hang upon this fatal error, and therefore it has become the more difficult for them to repudiate it now. We do not, however, despair of its correction, for thinking minds within the pale of Christianity have already seen the absurdity of the "limitations and impediments" which have been imposed upon modern Christianity and are trying their best to get rid of them. We are certain that as soon as they realize the harm and mischief which follows from the doctrine of the sacrifice of Jesus, they would not hesitate in the least to condemn it as an innovation of ignorant men.



Historically the doctrine of the sacrifice of Jesus is without any foundation at all. It is admitted even by the Christians that the true principles of salvation had been taught to the Israelites by revelations granted by Almighty God to their prophets. These principles are further, according to Christian admission, safely preserved in the books of the Old Testament. The sacrifice taught to them as necessary for salvation agrees every whit with the teaching of Islam, though, owing to the immature development of the human faculties at that early age, the sublime conception of sacrifice, which is to be found in Islam, was not revealed to the Jewish people. But still it is a difference of degree and not a difference of kind. The principle is the same, only in Islam it is developed to the highest stage. Had Almighty God appointed the one way of salvation for man which is preached by the Christians, *viz.*, that He should have a son who should bear the sins and curses of all sinners and then be crucified, it is evident that this principle should have been taught to the Jews and the revelations of the prophets of God as preserved safely according to Christian belief, in the books of the Old Testament, should have contained it in plain words. Almighty God could, of course, have told the Jewish people that though His son being yet in his infancy, was not sufficiently grown up and powerful to bear the burden of sins, yet he would, no doubt, appear later on and take away their sins. For it cannot be supposed that Almighty God pointed out one way of salvation to the Jews, a second to the Christians, a third to the Muslims, and numerous other ways to other prophets appearing in other countries at other times, thus changing His plans every time that He granted a revelation. But one would in vain turn over the pages of the Old Testament books and other Jewish writings to find the slightest trace of the Christian doctrine. The Jews never entertained the belief, nor did their prophets ever teach them, that a son of God was to be crucified in order to enable them to secure salvation. In this point the Jewish code agrees in all points with the Muslim law. They both condemn the doctrine of atonement and require that every person who seeks salvation should turn to God with sincerity and zeal, seek pardon for and protection from, sins from Him, subdue the evil desires and passions and do deeds of virtue to seek the pleasure of



God, and walk in perfect obedience to the laws and commandments of God, and sacrifice all one's interests in His way. The Jewish doctors hold this to be the means of salvation to this day, and this belief on the fundamental doctrine of salvation gives the lie to the Christian innovation that salvation depends on the sacrifice of the son of God.

We will now consider briefly the genesis of the idea of sacrifice, as entertained by the Christians. There is one important point which determines how this idea came in. Not only did the earlier prophets never teach the Christian doctrine of salvation, but Jesus himself throughout his whole life, including his ministry, had the same idea of sacrifice as was taught by the Jewish law. The Gospels bear ample testimony to this. The offering of his mother after child-birth, Jesus, going to Jerusalem with his parents to observe the Passover and his keeping the Passover with all his disciples the night before his death, are all matters related in the Gospels and prove conclusively that from his birth to his death Jesus observed the law of sacrifice as taught by Moses and the prophets, and did not formulate any new doctrine on the point. Not only did he himself observe the Jewish law of sacrifice, but he taught the same, not entertaining for a moment the idea that his sacrifice had replaced the old law of sacrifices. He heals a leper and then tells him to go to the priest and offer for his cleansing "those things which Moses commanded." (Mark I: 44). Evidently the man who was so healed believed in him. And still more plainly in his famous sermon on the mount he enjoins his followers: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath sinned against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. V. 23-5). There is, moreover, not a single word in the Gospels recorded as a saying of Jesus, which can be considered as a development of the Jewish idea of sacrifice. It is an error to suppose that the Jews at all times entertained a crude idea of sacrifice. Their prophets had revealed to them its deep spiritual meaning. Under the heading "Atonement Idea Spiritualized," the Jewish Encyclopædia says: "In Mosaic ritualism the atoning blood thus actually meant the bringing about of a



reunion with God, the restoration of peace between the soul and its maker. Therefore, the expiatory sacrifice was accompanied by a confession of the sins for which it was designed to make atonement. . . . or as Philo says, 'not without the sincerity of his repentance, not by words merely but by works the conviction of his soul which healed him from disease and restored him to good health.' And again : " Yet, while the sacrificial rites were the only means of impressing upon the people God's holiness and the dreadful consequence of men's sinfulness, the idea of atonement assumed a far deeper and more spiritual aspect in the lives and teachings of the prophets. Neither Hosea, Amos and Micah, nor Isaiah recognises the need of any means of reconciliation with God after estrangement by sin, other than repentance." (Vol. II, 276). " Take with you words, and turn to the Lord : say unto Him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously : so will we render the calves of our lips." (Hos. XIV: 2). " Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God " (Micah VI: 6-8). These words clearly explain the Jewish doctrine and Jesus did not add to or take away any thing from it. The early Christians followed in the footsteps of their master and continued to worship in the temple and sacrifice their offerings like other Jews. Paul himself who later on saw it convenient to desert the old Jewish faith, adhered, in the beginning of his career as an apostle, to the Jewish customs. He stated in his defence before Felix that he came to Jerusalem to worship and make offerings (Acts 24).

It is thus clear that the Christians had not formulated for themselves any new belief regarding salvation until sometime after the crucifixion of Jesus. It was not even immediately after his crucifixion that his sacrifice was regarded as annulling the effect of previous



modes of salvation. If Jesus actually believed that his death had any such effect, it was his duty first of all to inform his disciples that the law of Moses would be abrogated by his death, and the Christians should have from the beginning entertained this belief. As a matter of fact, this belief was gradually formulated as difficulties arose. At first it was couched in figurative language while a literal significance was attached to it later on. The apparent death of Jesus so soon after he had entered upon his ministry, was not so great a difficulty as the mode of that death. The law of Moses provided that crucifixion brought a person under the curse of God. The Jews, therefore, plotted to get Jesus crucified, so that they might convince the masses that being under the curse of God, he could not be a true prophet or even a righteous person. In this object they were apparently successful, and therefore, the Christians were obliged to seek some explanation for the crucifixion of Jesus, as they were taunted by the Jews that their master was under the curse of God. That explanation was suggested to some ingenious brain in the assertion that Jesus was sacrificed for others and cursed for their sake, and once started the plan worked excellently. The idea was taken from the Old Testament from the description of the sufferings of the prophets for the sake of their people. The prophets made atonement for the sins of their people, not by committing suicide but by fasting, praying and interceding for them. Thus did Moses intercede for his people when Almighty God was wrath with them because of their having taken the calf for their God. The wrath of God was so provoked against the people that He was going to consume them but Moses, the Prophet of God, interceded for them, and they were saved because of his entreaties, (Ex. 32: 30). This was the idea of the sufferings of the righteous for the sake of their people and it is easily intelligible to all men of common sense. But the Christians when confronted by difficulties of a serious nature worked it in to the grotesque idea of the suicide of one man for all the sinners of the world and loaded him with their curses, so as to make him suffer all the consequences which a sinner must suffer, *viz.*, estrangement from, and hatred and enmity towards, God, and association with the spirit of evil.



We have now to see whether the Christian doctrine has been productive of any good. If the sacrifice of Jesus has any effect in procuring salvation, in must either consist in keeping back the sinners from sins or in pardoning them as they continue their transgressions. As regards the first alternative, there is not the slightest proof. Even the apostles were guilty of disgraceful sins after they believed in Jesus. No one who for a moment casts a glance at the impurities and iniquities of Christian countries will ever entertain the opinion that the atonement of Jesus has the least efficacy in saving men from sins. As regards the other alternative the idea is horrible, because it permits every licentiousness under the cloak of religion. A thief, a murderer or an adulterer may do all the harm in his power and still be saved because he trusts in the blood of Jesus. If this is true, the believers on this doctrine would be dangerous enemies of society. Moreover the doctrine of atonement is not logically connected with any of these results. It is simply a supposition that because a man thinks that Jesus died for him, therefore he would either not sin at all, or if he sins, he would not suffer any punishment. We have already discussed the nature of sin and its remedy, from which the reader can see the absurdity of atonement.

In short, there is not the slightest proof that a belief in the sacrifice of Jesus leads to salvation or brings about purity of life in a man, but a man can attain the nearness of God only by sacrificing his ownself and his desires. We do not mean to say that Christianity is totally devoid of good men, but that the imperfect goodness practised by some Christians is not the result of the belief in atonement. There are good men among every people, however, low the form of the religion they profess, but they are inclined to goodness more by their nature than their religion or training. The existence of such individuals who are not certainly free from every kind of evil, does not show that the religion they profess is true, for their goodness may not be at all due to their religion. To judge the truth of a religion from its beneficial effect on a people we must see whether there are individuals in it, who are perfect in their goodness and in whom accordingly such spiritual excellences are manifested as are not to be witnessed in any other people. This criterion is satisfied only by one religion in the world, *viz.*, Islam.



Islam has made thousands attain the perfect purity of life in which it may be said that the spirit of God lives within them. The light of Divine acceptance is so kindled within them as to make them manifestations of Divine glory. Perfect individuals of this type are present among the Muslims in every century, and the purity of their life is not a mere assertion with which there is no proof, but Almighty God testifies to it by heavenly signs which He shows in their support.

### THE MEANING OF SACRIFICES IN ISLAM.

The Id-ul-Azha or the day of sacrifices in the Mohamadan religion is observed on the tenth of Zul-Hijjah. The festival is meant to commemorate a great event in the history of religion, an event which is traced back to the great Patriarch and Prophet, Abraham, who is equally honoured by three of the greatest nations of the world, the Mohammadans, the Christians and the Jews. This memorable event was the abolition of human sacrifices. Among almost all the primitive people we find cases of the father sacrificing his child or a tribe its fellow-tribesman as an act of expiation or penitence. According to the story of Abraham as narrated in the Holy Quran, the great Patriarch saw in a vision that he was sacrificing his only son, Ishmael. Both father and son were willing to make this sacrifice, but with the light of the Divine revelation of which Abraham was the recipient, he saw that the vision had a deeper significance, and that he was not required actually to slaughter his son. That significance was to teach humanity the all-important lesson of self-sacrifice and self-renunciation by perfect obedience to the Divine commandments.

The event, therefore, which is commemorated in the "festival of sacrifices" conveys a threefold lesson. It commemorates in the first place the abolition of the savage custom of human sacrifice, which, however, was not limited only to savage people, by Abraham's action in sacrificing a ram though he had seen in a vision that he was sacrificing his son. The second lesson which it conveys is the abolition of piacular or expiatory sacrifices, that is to say, sacrifices of which the object is to reconcile an offended deity by taking away the life of the victim or of some other man or animal in his



place. The sacrifice which Abraham made was only in obedience to the Divine commandment and not as an atonement for a sin. Expiatory sacrifices have, instead of uplifting humanity, emboldened it in the transgression of the moral laws, for such transgressions could, according to this belief, be remedied by the sacrifice. The third and the most important lesson of Abraham's action was the revealing of the true meaning of sacrifice which was no more than a symbol for the real sacrifice of oneself. Perfect obedience to the Divine commandments under all circumstances was the great lesson which Abraham taught to his people and posterity by his sacrifice and it is to bring afresh that lesson before the mind that the great event is still commemorated by the Mohammadans.

The materialistic eye fails to discover the spiritual meaning which lies hidden beneath symbols and accordingly it condemns everything as formalism. Though it is true that with the lapse of time the Mohammadans themselves have, to a large extent, forgotten the meaning of the sacrifices made on the day of the *Id-ul-Azha* and it has gradually come to be looked upon as nothing more than a festival, yet the occasion is still not given to mere eating and drinking or playing and merriment such as we observe in the festivals of other nations. However much we may be sorry for the Mohammadans not realizing the deep meaning which lies hidden under the sacrifices, we cannot but admire the spirit of devotion which Islam has breathed into its followers when we contrast the practice of Mohammadans on their festival day with that of the Christians in the "holy season" of the Christmas which is marked by an excess of jollification hardly consistent with the celebration of the birth-day of the "man of sorrows." The spirit in which the "holy Christmas" is celebrated is well illustrated in the little anecdote left by Thomas Carlyle that during his walk one evening in the neighbourhood of his residence, he was astonished at meeting an unusually large number of drunkards until he remembered that it was a Christmas evening and that these people were celebrating the birth-day of their Redeemer.

This, however, is not a matter of satisfaction for Mohammadans. The charge of "formalism" against Islam is, no doubt, based, to a large extent, upon the



fact that the Mohammadans, while adhering strictly to external forms and observances, have become almost wholly foreign to the spirit and significance which lies beneath these symbols and thus they have retained the form without any life and vitality in it. The following verses of the Holy Quran will make clear the object which the injunction of sacrifice in Islam was meant to serve:—"(When you have sacrificed the camels) then eat of them and feed with their flesh the needy, those who ask humbly as well as those who ask not. Thus have We subjected these animals to you that you may be thankful. By no means can their flesh reach God, neither their blood, but it is your righteousness that reaches Him. Thus has He subjected them to you that you may magnify God for His guidance, and announce glad tidings to the doers of good," (22 : 37, 38.).

These verses make it clear that sacrifice in Islam has nothing to do with expiation. It is plainly taught here that the flesh or blood of the animals sacrificed does not and cannot reach God, but that it is only the spirit of righteousness in making the sacrifice that God accepts. As for the flesh, we are told that it should be eaten by the person who sacrifices the animal and out of it he should also feed the poor. In these few words are rejected all the ancient superstitions associated with sacrifices, as, for instance, in some cases the blood of the victim was applied to the horns of the altar as if it was blood which reached God or the particular god or gods of the people, and the carcase of the victim was buried or cast into the sea or burned not on the altar, but outside the city; and in others the sacrificial flesh was the gift accepted by the deity and assigned to the priests. These superstitious beliefs were rejected by Islam as well as the idea that the sacrifice of an animal could serve as an atonement for sins. The only thing that, according to the Holy Quran, God accepted in the sacrifice of animals was the righteousness of the heart.

We have now to see in what is righteousness of heart connected with the sacrifices on a particular day. It has already been stated that the sacrifices on the *Id-ul-Azha* are in commemoration of Abraham's submission to the Divine commandment. The sacrifice of an



animal on the tenth of *Zul-Hijjah* is in the first place an injunction for those who perform the pilgrimage at Mecca and it is afterward extended to other Mohammad-ans living anywhere in the world who can afford to buy and sacrifice an animal. To find the meaning which lies under this symbol, therefore, we must consider the sacrifice as it was originally enjoined in connection with the pilgrimage, as is clear from the treatment of this subject in the Holy Quran in the chapter entitled the "Pilgrimage." The pilgrimage to Mecca represents in the holy religion of Islam the last stage of spiritual advancement. In performing the pilgrimage, the spiritual wayfarer shows that he has severed all his lower connections for the attainment of the great object of his life. As with his body he makes a circuit round the Divine temple on this earth, his heart hovers about the Divine temple on heavens of which the earthly temple is an emblem. The pilgrim sacrifices all his interests for the love of God, but this does not mark the end of this sacrifice. He is willing to sacrifice his very life for the sake of his Master and in token of this he sacrifices an animal, like the great Patriarch Abraham. The sacrifice of an animal after the pilgrimage is thus the final step in this last stage of spiritual advancement and it shows that the believer is not only willing to sacrifice all his interests, but also his very self in the way of God to attain the highest stage of spiritual advancement.

The verses that follow the two verses relating to the sacrifice of animals quoted above will afford the reader further testimony as to the true significance of the sacrifice of animals. Immediately after the injunction relating to the sacrifice of animals we read: "A sanction is given to those against whom arms have been taken up (by the unbelievers) to fight against their enemies, because they have been oppressed much, and verily God is well able to succour them.—Those who have been driven forth from their homes wrongfully, only because they say 'Our Lord is God.' And if God had not repelled the excesses of some men by others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques wherein the name of God is ever commemorated would surely have been destroyed. And him who helps the cause of God, will surely God help," (22: 40, 41). To a



superficial reader these verses would appear to be unconnected with the subject of sacrifices, but there is a deep connection between the two subjects, and this connection will also explain the reason why verses revealed during the early years of the Holy Prophet's life at Medina were placed in a chapter revealed during his closing years and at the particular place in that chapter where we now find them. The subject treated in these verses is the permission given to the Mohammadan to fight against the unbelievers who had already taken up arms against them for the extirpation of Islam. The Mohammadans had suffered all kinds of persecutions at the hands of the unbelieving Arabs, and for the sake of their religion they have been compelled to fly from their homes. They had given up all their connections, left their friends and relations, their houses and properties, and thus sacrificed their dearest interests in the way of God. But the enemy had now determined to cut them off with the sword and to meet the new position into which they were thrown they had to fight against their enemies and thus to sacrifice their very lives. It is for this reason that the subject of fighting against the enemy is introduced immediately after the injunctions relating to sacrifices. The sacrifice of an animal after the pilgrimage was really a symbol, and the significance which it conveyed was that the man should be prepared to sacrifice his very self in the way of God, and this makes clear the relation between the verses relating to sacrifices and the verses relating to the permission for fighting. Those who deny that the arrangement of the verses of the Quran follows any order should ponder over this.

It will thus be seen that the great lesson which Islam means to teach by the sacrifice of animals on the *Id* day is the lesson of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. In the traditions of the Holy Prophet, we are further told that the animal sacrificed should be free from every blemish that mars its beauty and should be in sound health. These directions are not without their meaning in the spiritual reality underlying sacrifice. They teach us that the sacrifice of interests or the sacrifice of self that we make should also be free from all defects, flaws and imperfections, from everything that mars its



beauty, completeness or perfection. Thus whole subject of the sacrifice of animals has a deep spiritual meaning, and the external act of sacrifice is only a symbol of the inner significance which is the true and real object of the institution.

Those who charge Islam with formalism forget that spiritual realities cannot exist without being clothed in an external form. As it is true that external forms having no spirituality in them are like a body without life, it is also a fact that there must be some external form for the significance of spiritual realities, without which they would be like a soul without a body. As it is in the combination of the body and the soul that physical life exists, so it is in the combination of the external form and the spiritual reality that the spiritual life has its existence. Just as our moral and spiritual qualities can only be displayed in actions, it is from actions that we are led to great moral and spiritual qualities. And again, nothing can so impress the mind with the noble idea of the sacrifice of our ourselves as the actual scene of an animal being sacrificed at our bidding. A man who considers the sacrifice of a lower for the benefit of a higher life to be a cruelty may be shocked at this, but such a man should transport himself from this world of realities to some other world where such sacrifices are not a common and daily sight. As we find the world, we see lower objects and lower life daily and hourly sacrificed for the sake of higher objects and higher life, and accordingly the sacrifice of an animal cannot be objected to in such a world if it serves a higher purpose, the purpose of the moral and spiritual elevation of a higher life. To make any reasonable objection against the practice of sacrifice in Islam, it must first be shown that this world can exist without the sacrifice of lower life for higher life.

#### ISTIGHFAR

Many people have stumbled at the true signification of *istighfar*. on account of their lack of knowledge of the Arabic language as well as of the true relation between man and God. *Istighfar*, as the very form of the word show, is a prayer. To see what is asked in the prayer we must go to the root of the word. It is derived from *ghafr*, other infinitive forms being *maghfirat*, *ghufrān*, &c. The primary and literal meaning of *ghafr* from which all



secondary significations are derived, is to cover or protect, as given in all Arabic dictionaries. The primary meaning of *istigfar* is, therefore, the seeking of protection, or a prayer for protection and support. To whom is the prayer to be addressed and from what is the protection to be sought? As to the first point, it is clear that the term being one of Islamic theology, the prayer could be addressed to none but God, for in Islam all prayers are addressed only to God and to none besides Him. It is further evident that the common form of this prayer is "I seek the protection of God" or "I pray to God for His protection." Thus far therefore, the conclusion is evident and even the Christians must admit that *istigfar* is a prayer addressed to God for His protection. The most important point that must be settled is, in what respect is the protection sought, *viz*, is the protection sought simply from the punishment of evil which a man has wrought, or is it sought primarily from the evil itself, and secondarily from its consequences if the evil has been done?

In the first place then, what is the relation of God to His creatures? After creating man God has not left to himself and alone, He is not noly the Creator but also the Supporter. Whatever has been made by the Divine hand is also supported by it. If, therefore, man needed the creating hand of God to come into existence, it is equally true that he needs His supporting hand to be saved from corruption. The Divine attribute of creation required that man should be created in the image of God, and the requirement of the Divine attribute of support was that what had been created in the Divine image, should not be given up to corruption and everlasting destruction. It is to denote these two attributes that the words *al-hyyul-qayyoom* are used in Holy Quran, indicating that God brings into existence and supports that which He has created. In fact, it cannot be contested that the existence of man needed two things, a Creator and a Supporter, the one to bring him into existence and the other to preserve him from corruption.

In consonance with this attribute of support in the Divine Being, we witness a want in the nature of man which is the necessary requirement of his being a creature. It is the weakness of his nature, his dependence upon something else. To this the Holy Quran testifies



in the verse "Man has been created weak." He is a creature and as such he is dependent upon his Creator. He resembles the infant that needs the assistance of its mother in every step. On the one hand then, we have the attribute of support in God, and on the other, the weakness and dependence of man which requires some support. Now, although Almighty God has provided numerous means for the support of man and given him His gifts in abundance without his asking for them, yet man being an intelligent being, must exercise his own will to avail himself of some of these gifts. Every sensible person perceives the feebleness of his nature, and feels that human nature by itself is powerless to resist the evil tendencies. If he, therefore, does not call to aid the Being which is the source of all strength, he rejects the gift which he could have claimed by asking and leads himself into evil. To this necessity of asking this gift, the Holy Quran refers in the verse "O God! Of Thee do we seek assistance that Thy support may uphold us against the weakness of flesh and protect us from stumbling and falling." In this verse Almighty God has taught man to pray for the Divine support and protection to make up for the deficiency of his nature. The more a man feels the weakness of his nature, the more he will ask for the Divine strength, and to a greater extent he will consequently be protected from evil.

So far the argument is so clear that we do not think any one admitting the existence of God will seriously call it in question. There is the attribute of support in God and there is the weakness in the nature of man, and there is the necessity that man must ask for the Divine support to overcome the evil. In other words, the man who desires to be protected against evil, must pray to God to grant him His protection and support. This we have already seen is the proper significance of *istighfar* which we have shown as meaning a prayer addressed to Almighty God for His protection and support. Such prayer we have now shown, is necessary for protection from evil. Hence the necessity of *istighfar* for every person without any consideration as to the actual commission of sin by him. Even if sin had no existence in the world, *istighfar* being a requirement of the creation of man, would still have been there. It exists that the building which God's own hand has erected might not be



demolished. But such a thing was not possible in the very nature of things without the supporting hand of God. There was a craving in the very nature of man without whose satisfaction he could not have attained to perfection. To satisfy this he was guided to say *istighfar* and thus make up the deficiency of human nature by imploring the strength of God. The Divine attribute of creation is manifested when a man is brought into existence but the quality of support needs a constant manifestation as it is to continue with the life of man. Hence the necessity of constant *istighfar*.

From the above it will be clear that *istighfar* is primarily needed for protection from the evil itself and that, therefore, the prayer asked for in *istighfar* is primarily in respect of protection and support against the feebleness inherent in human nature. The nature of man and the attributes of God both require that *istighfar* should in the first place be for protection from evil. Other considerations lead to the same conclusion. If the desire of being protected from the punishment of the evil that has been done, is impressed upon the human heart, the desire of being protected from the evil itself is still more so. In fact, the latter desire is permanent and inherent in the nature of man and is the primary consideration of every human being whether he has sinned or not, whereas the former desire takes possession of the heart only upon actual commission of sin. Salvation itself is nothing but a deliverance from the bondage of sin. And since every human being yearns after salvation, it is clear that the first and the primary consideration of all human beings is to be delivered from evil. Nay, the desire to be relieved of the evil consequences of sin cannot come alone. True desire for the pardon of sins never enters the heart unless it has a strong yearning to be protected from the evil itself. There is no true repentance unless the heart hates evil and desires to get rid of it for ever. All this shows the importance of the desire in human heart to be delivered from evil, and proves beyond a shadow of doubt that if *istighfar* were to be limited to only one object, that object must be protection from evil, and that protection from the consequences of evil would only be a secondary object in human heart.

This conclusion is further strengthened upon a consideration of the object with which the prophets are raised,



The primary object of their appearance in the world is to deliver men from evil, and not to grant them pardon for the sins which they go on committing. The work done by a prophet can only be judged from the deliverance from evil which he has effected, and this is the ground upon which their respective merits may be compared. It is for this obvious reason that the Holy Prophet Mohammad has an eminence not reached by any other prophet. He was raised at a time when darkness prevailed on the face of the earth and people had gone astray both in doctrine and practice. The Arabs who were directly addressed by the Holy Prophet had sunk deep in vice and hardly knew the name of morality. Within a short time the Holy Prophet effected a marvellous transformation in their lives and delivered them from every evil in which they were involved. From the depths of degradation he raised them to the highest pinnacles of civilization. The Prophet, therefore, effected a palpable deliverance from evil. It is here too that the failure of Jesus is most evident. About him there is the only boast that through him the sins of people were pardoned, but the Gospels do not tell us how many thousands of people he delivered from evil in his life-time. As to the transformation alleged to have been effected after his death in his few followers, we cannot give the story any credit in the face of the fact that he was not able to deliver even his chosen disciples from sin in his life-time. Even the eleven, say nothing of the twelfth, were guilty of a grave sin in deserting their master at the critical moment.

In short, the great object with which prophets appear, is to deliver people from the bondage of sin and the Holy Quran teems with verses to this effect. And since this object, as is admitted even by the opponents of Islam, cannot be attained except through humble prayers to God to that effect. Who alone can support a man against the power of evil, it would be strange if a prophet, and particularly the prophet who had effected the greatest deliverance of mankind from evil, went away without teaching his people such a prayer. Is the Holy Quran, with its repeated injunctions to men to purify themselves devoid of the means by which such purity can be brought about? Did not the Holy Prophet teach the manner in which deliverance from evil could be obtained notwithstanding that he



delivered hundreds of thousands of men from the bondage of sin? If *istighfar* is not that method, both these questions must be answered in the negative, which would be a strange combination of contradictory statements.

All these facts concur to prove that in *istighfar* the primary object is protection against the power of evil. As a prayer it is above all prayers. It is not a prayer for daily bread, but a prayer for the protection and support of God, a prayer for being saved from stumbling or falling, a prayer for perfection, a prayer for the highest Divine blessings. It is the closest form of communion with God, the highest flight of the spirit of man towards the Divine Being. The person who resorts to *istighfar* humiliates himself before God. He sees the weakness of his nature, the dread of the path and the power and glory of his Maker. He does not rest satisfied with his own strength but flies to the protection of the Almighty Being and seeks assistance from Him. His whole delight, his very paradise, is in this that he should fly to that rock of strength, and without His shelter he cannot live. He supplicates God to save him from yielding to the weakness of the flesh, to strengthen the human nature and to take him in His refuge and under His shelter. His own self is annihilated and God is all in all to him. He prays to God that He may protect him from yielding to the frailties of human nature by His Divine power, strengthen him by His strength, lighten him by his celestial light, and instruct and guide him by His Divine instruction. The man who constantly recurs to *istighfar* feels his own dependency and turns to God for help and aid, and thus gives evidence that he has overcome the weakness of flesh and His light descending upon him, has suppressed every infirmity of nature which could have led to sin. Being sensible of his weakness, the wise man does not rely upon his own strength but calls the Lord to his aid that he might not slip or slide and has recourse to *istighfar*. The sinless man flies for help and succour to God. He knows it for certain that human nature does not merely as such possess perfection but that it receives perfection from God, that it has not got any strength, but that strength is given to it every moment from above, and that it has no infallible light but that such light comes to it from the Almighty. From



among men he only is perfectly sinless who strengthens his soul by drawing the Divine power by means of *i-tighfar*, and does not cease for a single moment to draw it by his supplications, prayers and cries. The secret of the absolute unity of the Divine Being is closely connected with the principle that sinlessness is not the independent possession of any mortal being but a thing flowing from a higher source, the gift of God to such of his servants as implore for it day and night.

We have not the least hesitation in admitting that *istighfar* comes to have a secondary meaning, but this sense of the word does not in any way impair its true and primary significance which remains unchanged. In its extended sense the word comes to mean "praying for the protection of God from the consequences of faults already committed." It must be noted that the idea of praying for the protection of God, the root idea, is still present in the new sense, though in this case the protection is sought from the punishment which must befall a person in consequence of sin which he has committed. But in this sense the word has never been used of those whom God terms His chosen ones and His associates and whom He states as having near access to Him. For to them God promised that no punishment shall touch them and that they shall be seated in the lap of God's mercy. How can their *istighfar* be construed to mean a prayer to be saved from hell-fire and everlasting damnation notwithstanding that it is said of them: "They shall not hear the slightest sound of hell-fire," unless it be supposed that they have no faith in the promises of God. He whom God described as His mercy for the whole world saying *wa ma arsalnaka illa rahmatilalamin* can hardly be imagined to be still in doubt as to whether he shall be taken in the mercy of God or not.

Verses from which it appears that the prophets of God are simply as it were tools in the hands of God and that their ownself is annihilated and lost, abound in the Holy Quran. Thus the greatest of them is commanded by Almighty God: "Say verily my condition is such that my own personality has become quite extinct, and my devotion and my sacrifice and my life and my death are solely and exclusively for God, the Lord of the worlds." This



verse proves conclusively that the prophets do not speak but when God makes them speak, and that they do not act but when God makes them act. Whatever they say or do, is said or done in obedience to the commandments of God and they have not the power to act against His will. They are dead to all besides God and are so absorbed in Him that every trace of self is lost. Their words and deeds are all in resignation to, and in accordance with, the will of God. For instance, it is elsewhere said of the Holy Prophet in the Word of God "Whatever it appeared that thou didst cast, thou didst not cast it but it was God who did it," and again "The prophet does not speak out of impulse or his own desire but every word that his lips utter is the Word of God that is revealed to him." Thus both the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet are spoken of in plain terms as the words and deeds of God. In short, the Word of God has clearly asserted that the prophets are manifestations of the Divine will, and that they have no desire of their own. Every breath of their life and even their death, as the verse quoted above asserts, is purely for the sake of God and quite free from every mixture of the glory of self. Their souls are bowed down before the Divine threshold so completely and with such sincere devotion, that not the slightest share of others than God can be traced in them.

The Holy Quran teems with similar verses but the limits of our subject do not allow us to quote them all here. We shall add to those given above one from the chapter headed "The Prophets." There it is said: "And no apostle have we sent before thee. O Prophet! to whom we did not reveal that there is no God besides me, therefore worship me. Yet they (the Christians) say that the God of mercy has begotten a son (Jesus). Glory be to God; the apostles are but His honored servants (and Jesus was one of them); *they speak not till He has spoken, and at His bidding do they act.* He knoweth what is before them and what is behind them: and they shall not intercede but for him with whom He is pleased, and they fear God. But if an apostle were to say 'I am a besides God' (as the Christians suppose Jesus to have said), such a one will we punish with hell: in this manner do we punish



the offenders." These verses which occur in the chapter entitled "The Prophets" we have quoted at some length in order to show that in the whole passage, before as well as after the italicised words, none but the prophets is spoken of. The words given in italics are those to which we wish to draw the reader's attention. Of the prophets of God it is here stated that they do not speak till God has spoken and that they do nothing till God has bidden them to do it. Here again Almighty God identifies the words and deeds of the prophets with His own words and deeds, and, therefore, the prophets can never be said to act against His will. And how can they, when they are sent to execute the will of God? How can the executor of the will of God oppose that will or act against it; and if he does, he cannot be the executor. As manifestations of the Divine Being, they are also manifestations of His words and deeds. It may not be out of place to remark here that although there is only a supposition in the words. "If an apostle were to say I am a god," and that supposition is negatived by the next clause which says that he shall be punished with hell (because Almighty God has also said that no prophet of God shall go to hell), yet we cannot deny that there may be here an allusion to the Christian doctrine which first makes the prophet Jesus assert godhead and then sends him to hell.

The verses quoted above, and other similar verses in the Holy Quran, put the question beyond all doubt that Almighty God regards the words and deeds of the prophets as His own words and deeds, and that they turn only as He turns them. They are like dead men in the hands of God. They have not their own passions or desires, nor are their movement or their utterances or their resolutions their own. Movement or rest, pleasure or pain, happiness or grief, love or enmity, forgiveness or revenge, charity or parsimony, courage or timidity, mercy or wrath, cannot be ascribed to them, for they have no will or feelings of their own. They are under the full control of the Almighty and their faculties are all engaged in His service.

Thus, though *istighfar* primarily means only a prayer for the protection and support of God, and is in that sense used of the holy prophets of God, its meaning is extended in the case of the generality of mankind for whom both prayers are needed, viz., a prayer for protection from the



punishment of sins committed and a prayer for future protection from the commission of sins. This combination of both prayers in the same word reveals a deep knowledge of human nature. It shows that the Holy Quran does not regard a mere remorse for the past faults as true repentance unless it is accompanied with a true and ardent desire to be saved from sin and a resolution to avoid sinful conduct in the future. *Istighfar*, therefore, answers both yearnings of the human nature and responds to both the needs which a man can have for salvation. Thus *istighfar* is the highest form of prayer for all classes or persons.

*Istighfar* as here explained on the basis of the Holy Quran is the true and only means of drawing the strength and support of God, the only course for attaining the nearness of God and the only path by walking in which a man may attain sinlessness and salvation, and no sensible person would, we think, have any hesitation in admitting it as such. But those who instead of trusting in God, trust in the blood of a man, can never realize the blessings of *istighfar*. Their strength and support is not in God but in a weak man who was crucified (as they say) some two thousand years ago. They reject *istighfar* as the true remedy for sin, abuse the prophets of God, insult God Himself, and hold that out of the hundreds of thousands of men that are crucified and hanged in every age as being pernicious to society, the crucifixion of one particular man whom they name, has taken away the sins of all the world or at least of that portion of it who think that this crucifixion had really such an effect. He was born like ordinary men, had all their weaknesses and failings, was subject to the same suffering and diseases as other mortals are, never showed that he possessed Divine power in the slightest degree, and at last died the death of a great culprit, yet we must take him for a god because the Christian Missionaries say so. If the understandings of these men cannot realize the sublime significance of *istighfar*, they must be excused, for a false doctrine has dulled their brains.

To make the matter more clear, we shall however produce further evidence from the Holy Quran that a resorting to *istighfar* is looked upon by the holy book as the highest accomplishment of good men. Thus in the chapter entitled the "Scattering" we read Verily the



righteous shall dwell amid gardens and fountains with the blessings which their Lord hath given them; this is a reward to them, for before this they were the greatest doers of good, passed the greater part of night in devotion to God and when morning came they resorted to *istighfar*, i.e., sought the Divine strength and support." It should be noted that in this verse *istighfar* is described as a deed of righteousness, the effect of which as here stated, is not that they were saved from the punishment of hell but that Divine blessings and favors were showered upon them in abundance, and rich rewards were given to them on account of their *istighfar*. The word *mushin* used in this verse has been defined by the prophet himself as denoting a person who worships God with the sincere devotion of one who actually sees Him or at least of one who deems himself in the presence of God, and, therefore, cannot turn aside from His path. It should be further noted that when a person reaches the stage at which he sees God, he cannot sin; for then he is certain that the Almighty God in whose presence he stands shall consume him if he goes against His will; and at that stage he shuns sin and keeps away from it as a person keeps away from burning fire, being certain that the fire shall consume the part of his body which it touches. Now the verse says that the blessings of God shall be given to men as a reward for their goodness is described as consisting in their praying to God for the greater part of the night and their resorting to *istighfar* in the morning. If *istighfar* is to be limited to prayer for protection from the punishment of evil, the verse would be meaningless. It would be strange that men who were in the presence of God all night, should ask pardon for their sins in the morning, as if they looked upon their devotion as a sin, and standing in the presence of God all night as a transgression, and, therefore, made up for these sins in the morning by asking pardon. The plain import of the words of this verse is that men who overcome the night, pray for the Divine protection and support in the morning to keep them firm in His path and not to let them slip, for they feel that without the strength and support of God they would not be able to overcome the frailties of their nature, and, therefore, pray afresh for the Divine gift that the bliss which they enjoy in the



presence of the Lord might not be lost by the weakness of their flesh. This is the plain and natural interpretation that we can put upon the words. But if *istighfar* is simply construed as asking pardon for sins which a man has committed, the words. "They resorted to *istighfar* in the morning" ought to have followed some such statement as "They kept sinning during the night," because the natural consequence in that case would be that having committed sins during the night, they asked pardon for them in the morning.

Another verse which shows that the Holy Quran considers *istighfar* as a highly commendable deed for the righteous is the following: "The patient, and the truthful, and the lowly and the charitable, and those who resort to *istighfar* at morning times." In the first place this verse renders *istighfar* a necessity for the good. To be righteous a man is not only commanded to practise virtues such as patience, truth, lowliness and charity, but is also commanded to constantly resort to *istighfar*. From this it is clear that *istighfar* not only saves one from punishment but also like other virtues draws the blessing and favors of God in abundance. Secondly, by closing the enumeration of the virtues with the word *mustaghfirin*, it is plainly indicated that all these virtues are given to the person who resorts to *istighfar*. Both these points conclusively settle the meaning of *istighfar* and show that it is primarily a prayer to God to be able to act according to His will and to be protected and supported against the weaknesses of the flesh.

Not only is *istighfar* described as leading to virtuous deeds, but *maghfirat* is also promised as the gift of God to those who lead a virtuous course of life. Thus we read "But those who stick to virtue and shun vice and do the deeds that are righteous, to them shall be granted *maghfirat* and a great reward." The proper significance of the word and, therefore, we have so translated it. Here *maghfirat* is promised as a reward to those who do righteous deeds. In this case it is clear that *maghfirat* cannot mean pardon for sins because the persons to whom it is promised are plainly described as being those who have been doing righteous deeds. The *maghfirat* is clearly the strength and support of God granted to the righteous by which they are enabled to make



spiritual progress and advance higher and higher towards perfection. In fact, since *maghfirat* is the protection and support of God, a man always stands in need of *maghfirat*. In the same manner as he stands in need of God. He cannot be independent of the one as he cannot be independent of the other. Nay, a man resorts to *istighfar* in proportion to his spiritual advancement, and hence the need for *istighfar* never ceases. The *maghfirat* of God shall, therefore, continue even in paradise.

To this need of *maghfirat* even in paradise, the Holy Quran has attested elsewhere in plain work. Thus in Sura Mohammad occur the words with respect to those living in paradise: "For them in paradise shall be fruits of all sorts and *maghfirat* from their Lord." Here *maghfirat* is plainly described as a reward which shall be granted to the good in paradise. And again "(Those who shall enter into paradise) shall say 'O Lord, perfect our Light and grant us *maghfirat*.'" This unceasing desire for perfection and *maghfirat* shows clearly that progress in paradise shall be endless. From these two verses it is plain that even after an entry into paradise which shall only be possible after obtaining God's pardon to those who have committed sins, the faithful shall still have a continual desire for *maghfirat* or in other words they shall still resort to *istighfar*, though they shall have been saved from punishment. According to the secondary meaning of *istighfar* which the opponents of Islam will fain have as the only interpretation, the object of *istighfar* is nothing but to be saved from punishment, i.e., the punishment which awaits a man for the sins he has committed. *Maghfirat* in this sense can only be desired by a person before he is rewarded or punished for his deeds. But the person who has entered into paradise after the pardon of his sins if he had committed any, cannot think of any punishment falling upon him, for he is in the abode of bliss where there shall be no pain or punishment of any sort and from which he is never to be expelled as God has promised, "And they shall not be expelled from paradise." Why shall then those who have entered into paradise say "O Lord, grant us *maghfirat*" and why does God mention *maghfirat* as one of the blessings in paradise, saying "For them in paradise



shall be *maghfirat* ”? Evidently enough, *istighfar* in this case is not a prayer to be saved from the punishment of sins.

What does *maghfirat* in paradise mean then? In this world and with this body there is the possibility to sin against which the Divine protection and support is sought for. Shall there be the same possibility in paradise? The Devil cannot tempt there. But it must be clearly understood that there are even in this world men whom the devil cannot tempt and over whom the evil one has no power. The Holy Quran says: “O Satan, thou hast no control over my chosen servants.” But notwithstanding this they are still commanded to pray and to resort to *istighfar*. In answering this we again draw the reader’s attention to the necessity for *istighfar*. *Istighfar*, as we have already shown, is a requirement of the nature of man and of the attributes of God. There is the Creator who is perfect and who has the attribute of support which must remain constantly at work so long as there are creatures. On the other hand, there are the creatures of God, *i. e.*, men, who are dependent upon the Creator for their perfection and for their support so long as they are creatures. Hence the necessity of *istighfar*. But we know it for certain that notwithstanding continual progress men shall still be creatures and still dependent upon God. Any degree of perfection to which they may attain in this world or the next, cannot be equivalent to the perfection of the Creator. They are still creatures and must still depend upon the Creator however high they may rise. Hence the continual necessity of *istighfar*. In paradise the righteous shall be ever ascending upwards and shall regard every state as defective in comparison with a higher one to which they shall aspire and shall, therefore, pray to God to suppress the defective state that they may get to the higher. Hence, since progress is endless, the desire for *maghfirat* shall never cease.

There are many other verses showing clearly that the Christians have not made any approach to a right understanding of the sublime and exalting signification of *istighfar*, but as the subject has already grown more lengthy than we intended to make it at the outset, we refrain for the present from making any more quotations from the Holy Quran. To one more fact in this connection



we would draw the reader's attention. The Christian Missionaries insist that the verse occurring in the chapter entitled the "Victory" refers to the pardon of sins granted to our Holy Prophet which he had actually committed. Leaving the true interpretation of this verse for some other occasion, we wish here to point out the absurdity of the interpretation which the opponents of Islam insist upon as the true interpretation. According to all authorities the chapter entitled the "Help" was revealed after the "Victory," for the "Victory" was revealed before the conquest of Mecca while the "Help" was revealed after Mecca was taken. Now in the "Help" Almighty God says to the Holy Prophet "and resort to *istighfar* or seek the *maghfirat* of God," which our adversaries would construe into "ask pardon for thy sins," whereas they also hold that all his sins, past and future, had been pardoned at the time that the "Victory" was revealed. All these inconsistencies are the result of misinterpretation, and if they had the slightest sense of justice they would have admitted their error.

In conclusion we may make a passing reference to another absurdity of the Christian Missionaries who hold and publish that all the prophets are spoken of as having resorted to *istighfar* and that Jesus alone has not been spoken of and then boast of it as a ground of Jesus' superiority over other prophets and of his exclusive sinlessness. From what has been said above, it is clear that if the Christian assertion is true, and if Jesus really did not resort to *istighfar*, it would be a ground of his inferiority and sinfulness, inasmuch as he did not seek the support of God. But the assertion is not true. Jesus has been mentioned as one of the righteous men, and, therefore, whatever is said of them is also said of Jesus. On one occasion we have: "Those who bear patiently, and do good deeds for them is *maghfirat*. If Jesus was one of those who struck to virtue and shunned vice and did righteous deeds, he was certainly granted *maghfirat*. Many other verses quoted above apply to him in the same way. On one occasion the Word of God says of angels. "And they always pray for the *maghfirat* of God for all those who are upon earth." If Jesus ever lived upon earth, the angels must have prayed for his *maghfirat*. We hope such absurdities would not be given place again in Christian writings. They had better let us know how Jesus is sinless according to the Gospels.